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Whittier's Brook.

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LANDSCAPE

IN

AMERICAN POETRY.

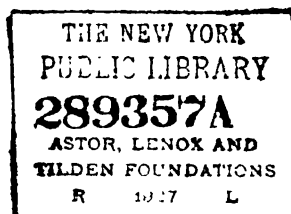
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"The Charles his steel-blue sickle crooks."

I.

THE house in which a great poet has lived always interests us, but it can not hold so much of his life as the trees through which his thoughts have made Æolian melodies, or the roadsides along which his imaginations have blossomed into song.

And the magic of poetry transfigures any landscape, making

it beautiful beyond itself as immeasurably as the ideal transcends the real.

The majestic wraith of Shakespeare glorifies the Avon, and the Ayr and the Doon are not so musical with their own ripples as with the ballads of Robert Burns. Through the songs of our own singers, also, we are beginning to see the beauty of the country in which we live. Our artists have already done much toward showing the world what American landscape is like, but by the aid of our poets they will do yet more; for what is the artist's hand without the poet's eye and soul? As they approach their perfect idea, Art and poetry are one.

American poetry is abundantly picturesque.

To begin with what may be considered the classic ground of our national minstrelsy—who, that is familiar with the verse of Lowell and Longfellow, does not know something of the scenery of the river Charles?

The latter invokes the spirit of the stream with the words—

Thou hast been a generous giver,
I can give thee but a song:

And, through the long regret of love in the heart of the singer, its shores are haunted with shadowy presences of never-to-be-forgotten friends. As thus:

. . . . A dreamy haze
Hangs o'er the Brighton meadows like a fate,
And on their margins with sea-tides elate,
The flooded Charles, as in the happier days,
Writes the last letter of his name, and stays
His restless steps, as if compelled to wait.

I also wait, but they will come no more,
 Those friends of mine, whose presence satisfied
 The thirst and hunger of my heart. Ah me!
 They have forgotten the pathway to my door!

The poetry of Lowell is luminous with the ever-returning gleam of this same quiet river. It is the mirror of his most delicate fancies, and he has given us its scenery in exquisite word-painting. In the "Indian-Summer Reverie"—

It— A stripe of nether sky,
 Slips seaward silently through marshes purple and green.

And the lover of the river is also the lover of the sea-marshes through which it flows:

Dear marshes! vain to him the gift of sight,
 Who can not in their various incomes share,
 From every season drawn, of shade and light;
 Who sees in them but levels brown and bare.

All round, upon the river's slippery edge,
 Witching to deeper calm the drowsy tide,
 Whispers and leans the breeze-entangling sedge.

And there are—

The wide-ranked mowers, wading to the knee,
 Their sharp scythes panting through the thick-set grass.

There, too—

. . . . The bobolink,
 Remembering duty, in mid-quaver stops
 Just as he sweeps o'er rapture's tremulous brink,
 And 'twixt the winrows most demurely drops.

This poem is, indeed, a succession of inimitable pictures.
 Again, in "An Invitation"—

The Charles his steel-blue sickle crooks,

 Where a twin sky had just before
 Deepened, and double swallows skimmed;
 And from a visionary shore
 Hung visioned trees, that more and more
 Grew dusk, as those above were dimmed.

And again, following our poet to his retreat "Under the
 Willows," we are shown where—

. . . . The sliding Charles,
 Blue toward the west, and bluer and more blue,
 Living and lustrous as a woman's eyes,
 Look once, and look no more, with southward curve
 Ran crinkling sunniness, like Helen's hair
 Glimpsed in Elysium, insubstantial gold.—

. . . . The deep meadows flowed
 With multitudinous pulse of light and shade
 Against the bases of the southern hills,
 While here and there a drowsy island-rick
 Slept, and its shadow slept.

Lowell is not too eloquent regarding the pastoral charm of our marsh-scenery. On the Mystic and the Saugus one loses the elm-shadowed verdure of the Charles, but has, instead—in the right season—the shaven gold of the salt-meadows widening with bronzed ricks to the open sea, that rims them with deepest ultramarine. This is the view of the traveler along the railways running eastward from Boston to Nahant. And the region is



*"Hampton meadows, where mowers lay
Their scythes to the swaths of salled grass."*

not without its poetic associations, although in "The Bridal of Pennacook" the tameness of its winter aspect is purposely brought out in contrast with the forest-wildness of the Upper Merrimack. There the marshes are described as—

Dull, dreary flats, without a bush or tree,
O'ercrossed by icy creeks, where twice a day
Gurgle the waters of the moon-struck sea.

But even these flats may be seen with a difference on a clear, crisp, autumnal day, or with their long sea-fringe lying illumined under a cloud-flecked sunrise.

Farther eastward the Rowley, and Salisbury, and Hampton meadows gain immensely in breadth, and their oak-islets and promontories, and woodbine-wreathed rocks, agreeably vary the vast level of hay-ricks stretching oceanward. These are the—

Low, green prairies of the sea,

which so frequently form the background of Whittier's poems :

Hampton meadows, where mowers lay
Their scythes to the swaths of salted grass ;

and where, moving hither and thither on the horizon, with the windings of the country road—

Agamenticus lifts its blue
Disk of a cloud the woodlands o'er.

Approaching them from their farthest inland border, you catch the glimmer of—

A luminous belt, a misty light,
Beyond the dark pine-bluffs and wastes of sandy gray ;
The tremulous shadow of the sea !

And this is the way the poet outlines for us the landscape from the adjacent beaches :

Behind them marshes, seamed and crossed
 With narrow creeks, and flower-embossed,
 Stretched to the dark oak-wood, whose leafy arms
 Screened from the stormy east the pleasant inland farms.

At full of tide their bolder shore
 Of sun-bleached sand the waters beat :
 At ebb, a smooth and glittering floor
 They touched with light, receding feet.
 Northward a green bluff broke the chain
 Of sand-hills ; southward stretched a plain
 Of salt grass, with a river winding down,
 Sail-whitened, and beyond, the steeples of the town.

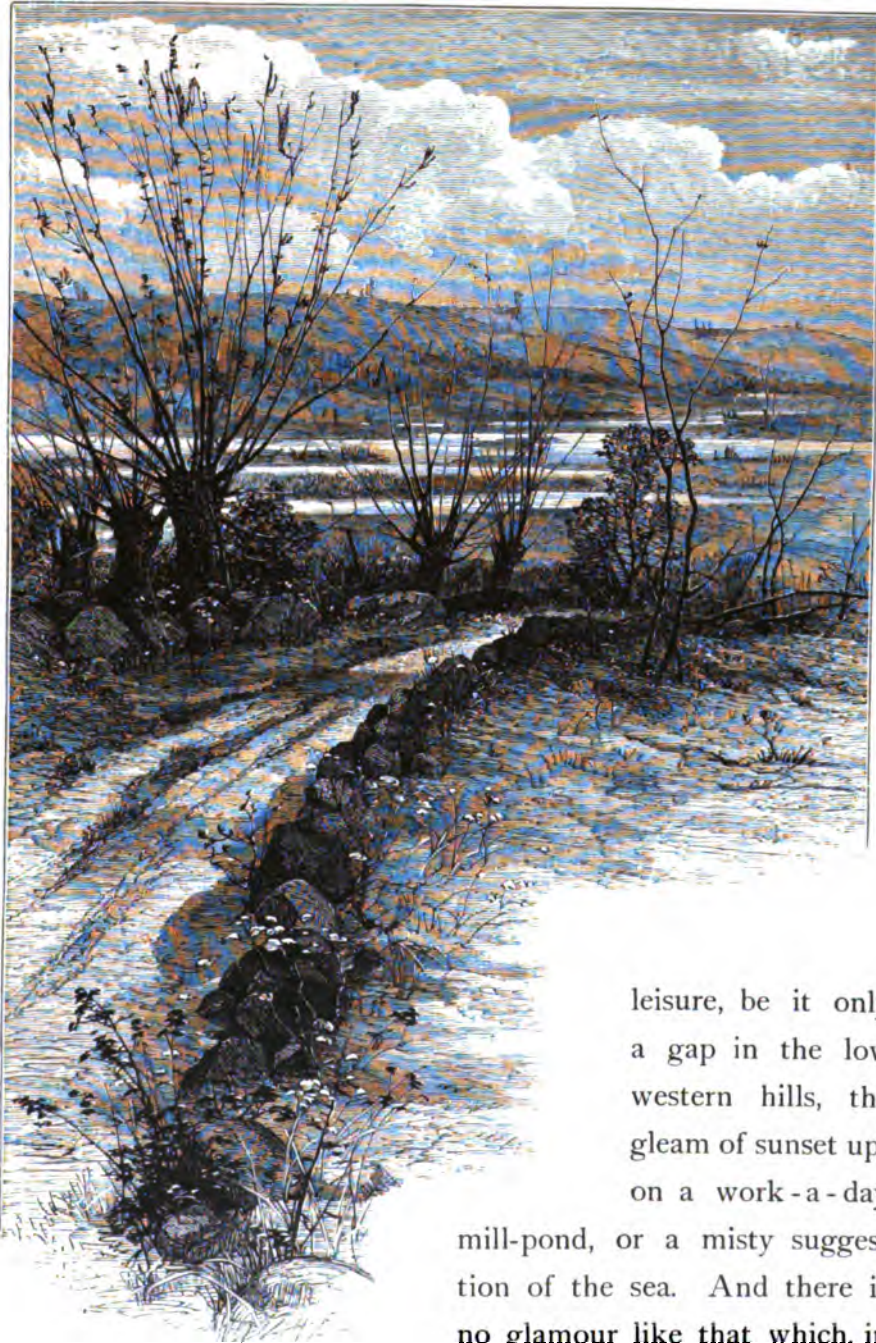
Whence, sometimes, when the wind was light,
 And dull the thunders of the beach,
 They heard the bells of morn and night
 Swing, miles away, their silver speech.
 Above low scarp and turf-grown wall,
 They saw the fort-flag rise and fall ;
 And, the first star to signal twilight's hour,
 The lamp-fire glimmer down from the tall lighthouse-tower.

Retracing our steps from the Hampton and Salisbury marshes, up the lower waters of the Merrimack, we are treading upon ground which is all a-bloom with the poetry of Whittier. The breezy seaside city of Newburyport, and the neighboring hills of Amesbury, and Haverhill, and old Newbury, are almost as well known to us as the ideal and historical personages with which his songs have peopled this whole region. In "Mabel Martin," in "Snow-Bound," and in many traditionary ballads, and verses relating to personal friendships, the familiar

landscape reappears. We know the look of the tranquil valley of the Merrimack from his native hillsides, nearly as well as the poet himself. How should we not, when he has sketched it distinctly ? as thus :

I see, far southward, this quiet day,
 The hills of Newbury rolling away
 With the many tints of the season gay,
 Dreamily blending in autumn mist,
 Crimson, and gold, and amethyst.
 Long and low, with dwarf-trees crowned,
 Plum Island lies like a whale a-ground,
 A stone's toss over the narrow sound.
 Inland, as far as the eye can go,
 The hills curve round like a bended bow :
 A silver arrow from out them sprung,
 I see the shine of the Quasycung :
 And round and round, over valley and hill,
 Old roads winding, as old roads will,
 Here to a ferry, and there to a mill.

The grandeur of mountain-tops, of wild cascades, and avalanche-piled ravines, is not unknown to American poetry ; but the portrayal of simpler surroundings of every-day life has formed the true bond of attachment between singer and listener. To feel that we have a birthright in common with our poets to landscapes which their touch has transfigured, is more to us than to dream of far-off magnificences of Nature, whither we may seldom escape from the trodden pathways of daily toil. Few spots in New England are wholly without an uplift and an outlook for the thought of the dreamer, in his brief interludes of



The Merrimack and Powwow.

leisure, be it only
a gap in the low
western hills, the
gleam of sunset up-
on a work-a-day
mill-pond, or a misty sugges-
tion of the sea. And there is
no glamour like that which, in
her best moods, Nature weaves

over a scene to which our eyes have always been accustomed :

The hills are dearest which our childish feet
Have climbed the earliest ; and the streams most sweet
Are ever those at which our young lips drank,
Stooped to the waters o'er the grassy bank.

And here—for we were lingering on the banks of the Merri-mack—we are led by our artist to the borders of its tributary, the Powow, that winds, beautiful, with Indian name and legend, among gentians and alders, around the base of its namesake hill, near the almost lifelong home of Whittier, in the busy little town of Amesbury. It is a poetic stream in itself, with its meadowy sinuosities, its shy withdrawals, and unexpected returnings to sight ; much more so through association with the genius of this most characteristic singer of New England.

From almost any elevation about the village we might say—

I see the winding Powow fold
The green hill in its belt of gold.

On its downward way it sets in motion the wheels and looms of the woolen-mills, yet, even in the noisiest locality, does not wholly divest itself of rural attractiveness, or the color of romance. Its meanderings receive a human interest, in the poet's lines, even from the passing footsteps of a tired working-woman :

And still, in the summer twilights,
When the river seems to run
Out from the inner glory,
Warm with the melted sun,

The weary mill-girl lingers
 Beside the charmed stream ;
 And the sky and the golden waters
 Shape and color her dream.

On the bridge over the Powow, at its junction with the Merrimack, more is to be seen than the contrasted beauty of the two rivers. The spot is associated with the memory of the poet's sister—Elizabeth—she of the

Large, sweet, asking eyes,
 who shared her brother's peculiar gift, and has left in verse a brief glimpse of herself standing here—

Watching how the little river
 Fell into the broader stream ; . . .

And I thought, " O human spirit,
 Strong and deep and pure and blest,
 Let the stream of my existence
 Blend with thine, and find its rest ! "

And the waters of the Powow and the Merrimack are not more perfectly mingled than were those two poet-lives, now known to the world only through him who yet moves among us in the fullness of his honored years.

Still loitering up the valley of the Merrimack, under the broad slope of cultivated hillsides, we reach the birthplace and homestead of the poet, now passed into the hands of strangers, and sadly changed from its old-time aspect of thrift and picturesqueness. But the brook is there, flashing a suggestion of

indignant regret from behind its low forest-shrubbery—the brook which the “Barefoot Boy” has told us of:

Laughed the brook for my delight
Through the day and through the night,
Whispering at the garden-wall,
Talked with me from fall to fall.

The brook—remembered as a friend by the survivors of the secluded fireside-circle in “Snow-Bound”—

The music of whose liquid lip
Had been to us companionship;
And, in our lonely life, had grown
To have an almost human tone.

Is it not also the brook which glances along the gracefully rustic fancies of “My Playmate” and “Telling the Bees”?

This streamlet has a peculiar charm—as having been the playmate of a poet’s childhood, and the accompanying music of his earliest verses. But other rivulets blend with the current of his singing; and all poets have delighted to join their voices with the melody of woodland streams.

Sweetest of all wild songs, and loveliest of all rural pictures, are those a brook makes, descending the dim rock-paths of a wooded cliff-side, or laughing and complaining through the sunshine and shadows of poetry. A mountain-brook is itself a poet. The river-infant springs with the gladness of a conscious life from its cloud-curtained cradle—

Leaping gray walls of rock, flashing through the dwarf pine.

Which of our poets has best caught the spirit of the run-

ning brooks it is not easy to say. Whether Whittier, among the hills, when—

All the woods were sad with mist,
And all the brooks complaining;



Murmuring Brooks.

or Bryant—

Where Isar's clay-white rivulets run
Through the dark woods like frightened deer;

or Longfellow—

In the green valley, where the silver brook
From its full laver pours the white cascade,
And, babbling low amid the tangled woods,
Slips down through moss-grown stones with endless laughter;

or Lowell, in the "Woodland Enchanted," where the little fount—

Slips winding and hiding
Through alder-stems mossy,
Through gossamer roots
Fine as nerves,
That tremble, as shoots
Through their magnetized curves
The allurements delicious
Of the water's capricious
Thrills, gushes, and swerves.

Every gentle or impetuous brooklet that flashes into light from under its hemlocks and birches has an individuality—a personality, almost—of its own. No least rivulet repeats another rivulet's story, or mirrors the color and shadow of any life save that of the trees, whose roots its sweet waters nourish, and whose intergrowth of leafage it reflects. And each deserves its own painter and laureate.

The brooks that we know in the songs of our poets—that ripple down past the threshold of our hearts through the soul and the lips of genius—make a gladness for us amid the blank and dusty ways of life, a green retreat, whither our suffocating fancies may at any moment escape. There is a human voice in their murmur; and, "as in water face answereth unto face"—the reflex of a living presence—the joy of a perennial friendship is in their freshening flow.

Blessings, then, upon our mountain-brooks, and hundred-fold blessings upon our poets, whose songs have made for them—

A music sweeter than their own!

II.



*"The new moon's modest bow grows bright,
As earth and sky grow dark."*

WHEN the work of a great poet is completed, and it is certain that from him we shall never have another word-picture or song, everything he has left us rises to incalculable preciousness. So is it now with the poetry of Bryant. Always severely studied and artistically perfect, these very qualities sometimes prevented a reader from feeling the warm life that throbbed under the careful finish of his style. His verse

never seemed cold to those who gave it loving and reverent study—the only means by which a real artist's work can be understood. To others, it must now open like a new landscape, reading it beneath the sacred illumination into which his memory has passed, as one of the immortal dead.

Bryant was undoubtedly the first American poet who impressed his countrymen deeply with the charm of their own native scenery. School-children of thirty or forty years since were fortunate in having such poems as "The Forest Hymn," "Monument Mountain," and "June," among the selections in their reading-books; for these not only taught them to appreciate exquisite rhythm, but awakened them to nature immediately around them—to the subtle changes of the seasons, as distinctively ours as any national peculiarity—to the beauty of the shy creatures that inhabit our woodlands; to our own wild-flower growths; and to the wonder of our own forests, and mountains, and prairies.

It was our own June, and not the foreign May-day of English verse we had so long and so vainly attempted to naturalize in our thoughts, that breathed through his lines—

Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom.

June, the queen-month of the year, shines with a tenderer radiance in the zodiac, since through her flowers the poet passed for ever from our sight :

. . . Flowery June,
When brooks send up a cheerful tune,
And groves a joyous sound.

There is an undertone of pathos in this early poem; the

wish that has since become a fulfilled prophecy murmurs through it, like the voice of a beautiful day foretelling its own end. But Bryant's pictures of June are usually full of motion and mirth. Was the spirit of the month ever so truthfully given as in these inimitable lines?—

There's a dance of leaves in that aspen bower,
 There's a titter of winds in that beechen tree,
 There's a smile on the fruit and a smile on the flower,
 And a laugh from the brook that runs to the sea.

In another familiar poem we have the antithesis of August and June—a delicately wrought study, also, of contrasted animation and repose, the distinctive characteristics of these two months. It was a happy fancy of the artist, in illustrating the verses, to place the quiet August scene where

The hills are still, the woods are dumb,
 In glassy sleep the waters lie,

like a gem in its setting of breezy June blossoms. We can feel even in winter the delicious stir of the season, as we look at the sketch and read the words:

When the fresh winds make love to flowers,
 And woodlands sing, and waters shout;
 When in the grass sweet voices talk,
 And strains of tiny music swell
 From every moss-cup of the rock,
 And every nameless blossom's bell.

The poet has an advantage over the painter, in being able to bring into his pictures that movement without some suggestion



"Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom."

of which a landscape is dead. Beneath the pen of Bryant, Nature is thoroughly alive. There is scarcely a mood of the winds

that does not ripple or sweep across his pages. He makes us see it

Rock the little wood-bird in his nest ;
Curl the still waters bright with stars, and rouse
The wide old wood from his majestic rest ;

or, breaking the vast stillness of the prairies into green undulations—

Toss the golden and the flame-like flowers.

But it is not the breeze alone that moves and has life in his verse ; it is everything. It is the sudden rain darkening the air, under which

Every leaf in all the woods
Is struck, and quivers ;

it is the climbing mountain-mist, that

Clings to the flowery kalmia, clings
To precipices fringed with grass,
Dark maples where the wood-thrush sings,
And bowers of fragrant sassafras ;

or it is the waterfowl fanning with his wings “the cold, thin atmosphere,” where he floats along—

Darkly seen against the crimson sky.

As magical is his use of tones. All autumn is with us again in that

Soft, repining sound,
When forest-leaves are bright,
And fall, like flakes of light,
To the ground.

It is the autumn breeze
 That, lightly floating on,
 Just skims the woody leas,
 Just stirs the glowing trees,
 And is gone,
 And wanders on, to make
 That soft, uneasy sound.

If Bryant does not always localize his pictures for us, no poet has produced any so thoroughly American in their out-of-door atmosphere. A foreigner may breathe the inmost spirit of our Indian summer and latest autumn, in reading the "Death of the Flowers." Here again the year lends vivid suggestions to the eye. The "sound of dropping nuts" and the sigh of the south wind intensify the stillness, and a dreamy enchantment clings to leafless boughs, and to the dim and scattered gold of wild-wood flowers, while through the trance-like suffusion of earth and air—

Twinkle in the smoky light the waters of the rill.

With Bryant, the forest-blossoms grow up in their separate beauty, each in its own place and season ; no imported lilies and daisies, but the common native flowers that children know and love—the yellow violet and the squirrel-cup, the late aster, the golden-rod, and the fringed gentian.

Yet there is not the least pettiness in these foreground studies. The

. . . . Delicate forest-flower
 With scented breath, and look so like a smile,

leans out from dim vistas of the aboriginal wilderness, where



"The hills are still, the woods are dumb,
In glazy sleep the waters lie."

"When the fresh winds make love to flowers,
And woodlands sing, and waters shout."

the footprints of deer and red-man are scarcely obliterated from the sod, under

Old trees, tall oaks, and gnarlèd pines,
That stream with gray-green mosses.

And, for largeness of delineation, for that firm, clear touch which seems to create a world in one sweeping outline, and which belongs to the greatest artists only, Bryant is preëminent among his brethren. In "The Prairies," "The Antiquity of Freedom," and in many other poems, we have noble renderings of our New World scenery :

Lone lakes—savannas where the bison roves—
Rocks rich with summer garlands—solemn streams—
Skies, where the desert eagle wheels and screams—
Spring bloom, and autumn blaze of boundless groves.

When Bryant gives us a picture of the sea, it is characterized by this same grandeur of handling—the steady, gradual increase of power that we feel in the gathering waves themselves, as they approach flood-tide. There is the bright, glancing, limitless expanse, upon which eye and thought find themselves powerlessly borne away :

. . . I look forth
Over the boundless blue, where joyously
The bright crests of innumerable waves
Glance to the sun at once, as when the hands
Of a great multitude are upward flung
In acclamation.

The picture changes from this scene of calm beauty to one of tumult and storm :

But who shall bide thy tempest, who shall face
The blast that wakes the fury of the sea ?

There is the fierce havoc of the hurricane among conflicting
armadas, when

. . . The vast hulks
Are whirled like chaff upon the waves ; the sails
Fly, rent like webs of gossamer ; the masts
Are snapped asunder.

And there is the dry land arising from the sea in the verse,
with the slow, patient certainty which characterizes the work of
the coral-architect :

. . . From age to age
He builds beneath the waters till, at last,
His bulwarks overtop the brine, and check
The long wave rolling from the southern pole
To break upon Japan.

In the poem called "The Unknown Way," where the fancy
is led on without a clew, until the last stanza but one is reached,
there is more of sea-vastness than in pages of mere description.
Yet it is only a hint and a question :

Dost thou, O path of the woodland,
End where these waters roar,
Like human life, on a trackless beach,
With a boundless sea before ?

There is a sort of twilight tenderness in some of his more
delicately drawn pieces, in its way unequaled ; as in the lovely
evening sketch, where

The new moon's modest bow grows bright,
As earth and sky grow dark.



*"But who shall bide thy tempest, who shall face
The blast that wakes the fury of the sea?"*

Through all Bryant's poetry we feel the presence of that noble reserve which accompanies the highest art, that reticence of genius which gives more in its wise withholding than in a too

prodigal bestowing. He opens for us only now and then a glimpse into his favorite haunts; yet the Hudson, the Kaaterskill, and the groves and rivulets of his native hills, are imparted for us in his poetry.

He is *the* landscape-painter among our poets, none of whom seems to have lived always, as he, in close and secluded sympathy with Nature. His verse shows that, even through the years which were given to business in the city, his heart was with her in her most sequestered retirement. With what constancy and devotion he loved her, and how graciously she rewarded him with an intimacy of communion such as few know how to attain and to keep, he has, in part, told us :

. . . The sunshine on my path
Was to me as a friend. The swelling hills,
The quiet dells retiring far between,
With gentle invitation to explore
Their windings, were a calm society
That talked with me and soothed me. While I stood
In Nature's loneliness, I was with one
With whom I early grew familiar, one
Who never had a frown for me, whose voice
Never rebuked me for the hours I stole
From cares I loved not, but of which the world
Deems highest, to converse with her. When shrieked
The bleak November winds, and smote the woods,
And the brown fields were herbless, and the shades
That met above the merry rivulet
Were spoiled, I sought, I loved them still; they seemed
Like old companions in adversity.
Still there was beauty in my walks.

The snowy woods are no less a delight to him :

When the slant sun of February pours
Into their bowers a flood of light.

And how perfect is that glimpse of the passing of winter
into spring !

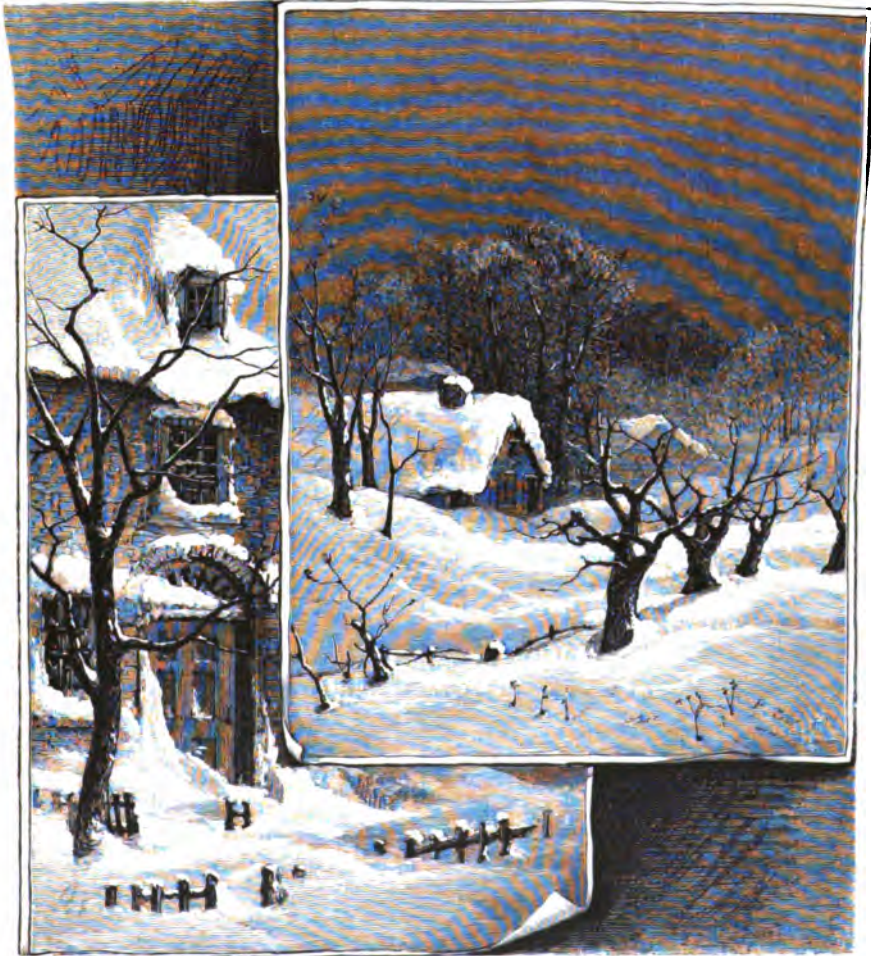
. . . When the noisy streams
Are just set free, and milder suns melt off
The plashy snow, save only the firm drift
In the deep glen, or the close shade of pines.

. . . Along the quiet air
Come and float calmly off the soft, light clouds,
Such as you see in summer, and the winds
Scarce stir the branches. Lodged in sunny cleft,
Where the cold breezes come not, blooms alone
The little wind-flower, whose just opened eye
Is blue as the spring heaven it gazes at—
Startling the loiterer in the naked groves
With unexpected beauty.

For Nature, Bryant has no vain showering of epithets, no tricks or coquetries, but the simplicity of a grave, faithful, unswerving love, which sees and reveals her as she is, through insight given only to the pure in heart.

Nature is transparently herself in his verse: therefore it is both satisfying and suggestive. And, therefore, while the beloved poet, in passing from earth, leaves his place an unfilled blank, his poetry must for ever remain to his countrymen among the most precious of their possessions.

III.



"The frolic architecture of the snow."

THE snow-scenery of our country has not been left unnoticed by our poets. It has furnished a background for some of their best ballads and lyrics, as well as a subject for excellent descriptive pieces. Anything otherwise would be strange, since

so many of the most celebrated among them have from their birth breathed the air of the bleak hills and snow-laden ever-green woods of the northern United States.

The verse of Bryant, whose eye was open to every passing phase of Nature, is full of pictures of this kind. His "Winter Piece," "Snow-Shower," and that lovely phantasy, "The Little People of the Snow," have their acknowledged place as favorites; nothing could be better in its way than his description of Kaaterskill Falls in winter; and Lowell, and Whittier, and Stedman, and Aldrich, and others, have given us some of their choicest sketches in the neutral tints, and the clear, keen contrasts of the frosty atmosphere in which we live so large a part of the year.

The homeliness of our rural architecture does but enhance the charm of our winter views. After a fresh fall of snow, the weather-stained farmhouse or barn, although built according to the plainest and most unsymmetrical of Puritanic models, takes on a picturesqueness which no elegant uniformity of French roofs is capable of receiving; for Nature, working to the despair of all other builders, can transform ugliness into beauty at her will.

Come see the north-wind's masonry.
 Out of an unseen quarry evermore
 Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
 Curves his white bastions with projected roof
 Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.

Mockingly

On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths,

And, when his hours are numbered, and the world

Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
 Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
 To mimic in slow structures stone by stone,
 Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
 The frolic architecture of the snow.

With these lines from Emerson's "Snow-Storm" all lovers of his poetry are familiar. We may parallel them with verses from other writers. The changes wrought by light snow drifts upon the surroundings of a New England homestead, always suggest something story-like and foreign, as in Lowell's "First Snow-Fall," the quaintness of "sheds new-roofed with Cummin," and in Whittier's "Snow-Bound":

The well-curb had a Chinese roof:
 And even the long sweep, high aloof,
 In its slant splendor, seemed to tell
 Of Pisa's leaning miracle.

And where is there so fairy-like a description of frost scenery as that in "Sir Launfal," of the little brook's work under the ice?—

All night, by the white stars' frosty gleams,
 He groined his arches and matched his beams,
 Slender and clear were his crystal spars
 As the lattice of light that trim the stars
 He sculptured every summer delight
 In his hair and chambered out of light
 Summer in every winter day
 Snow to every leaf and every spray
 Long, softening hours of moonlight
 Zephyr to every flower and every tree

Sometimes the roof no fretwork knew
 But silvery mosses that downward grew.
 Sometimes it was carved in sharp relief
 With quaint arabesques of ice-fern leaf.

'Twas as if every image that mirrored lay
 In his depths serene through the summer day,
 Each fleeting shadow of earth and sky,
 Lest the happy model should be lost,
 Had been mimicked in fairy-masonry
 By the elfin builders of the frost.

But we willingly return, from even these pleasant digressions,
 to the threshold of the Concord seer, where, as in hundreds of
 Northern homes—

. . . the house-mates sit
 Around the radiant fireplace, inclosed
 In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

We have no desire to intrude, and so break the charm, for
 out of glowing seclusion like this comes often the noblest work
 in art and letters. Not a few of the fairest pictures of summer
 poet ever painted have doubtless been evoked from the depths
 of his blazing hearth-fire, in wintry solitude. It would not be
 surprising if that grandest mountain-poem we know of in Ameri-
 can verse—Emerson's "Monadnock"—shaped itself in this way.
 The thought of the poet, following from his own fireside the

Thief-like step of liberal hours,
 Thawing snow-drift into flowers—
 To twilight parks of beech and pine
 High over the river intervals—

To see strange forests and new snow,
And tread uplifted land—

points out to us a grander summit
than could be formed by
any Titanic upheaval of rock,
or age-long sculpturing of torrent
and tempest. For his mind
joins its forces to the power
of the "hidden-working builder"—

Who builds, yet makes no chips, no
din
With hammer soft as snow-flake's
flight.

Call not waste that barren
cone
Above the floral zone,
Where forests starve :
It is pure use.

These gray crags
Not on crags are hung ;
But beads are of a rosary
On prayer and music
strung.

Probably the artist
does not live



*" Ere yet the summoning voice was still,
I turned to Cheshire's haughty hill."*

who could paint a picture of "Monadnock" which would do justice to Emerson's conception. He has delineated it through his "shaping spirit of the imagination," as really as Shakespeare did his human creations. Yet, the poem overflows with suggestion and inspiration for any one who would attempt to reproduce a mountain truthfully—a soul made visible through substance—as are all forms which reveal to us the beautiful or the sublime.

The mighty personality of "Monadnock" is what Emerson makes us feel ; and the fine, withering irony with which the spirit of the summit unfolds his visions upon the "bead-eyes" that come boldly up to face him is something unique in poetry :

I plant his eyes on the sky-hoop bounding ;
 "See there the grim gray rounding
 Of the bullet of the earth
 Whereon ye sail,
 Tumbling steep
 In the uncontinented deep."
 He looks on that, and he turns pale.

 I scowl on him with my cloud,
 With my north-wind chill his blood ;
 I lame him, clattering down the rocks ;
 And to live he is in fear.
 Then, at last, I let him down
 Once more into his dapper town,
 To chatter, frightened, to his clan,
 And forget me, if he can.

Mountains suggest pine-trees, the aboriginal, and, let us hope, the never-to-be-extirpated dwellers upon their slopes. True,

the hand of the utilitarian spoiler is upon their beauty and their glory all through the North, but, if ever our pine-forests are destroyed, the North will have lost the deepest intonation of its outdoor poetry. For the leaves of the pine are harp-strings played upon by the viewless presences of the air, and the bard can but receive their music, and let it reverberate through his song. In their somber contrast with the sheeny whiteness of hillsides and fields in winter, in the depth and thoughtfulness they add to a landscape, they are a source of unconscious inspiration to all who dwell among their shadows; and, naturally, the pine-tree has stirred into being some of the noblest lyrics of our land. It is

A harp for every wind,
A voice for every sky.

One of Bayard Taylor's best poems is his "Metempsychosis of the Pine":

Rooted upon a cape that overhung
The entrance to a mountain-gorge, whereon
The wintry shadow of a peak was flung
Long after rise of sun,
There did I clutch the granite with firm feet,
There shake my boughs above the roaring gulf,
When mountain whirlwinds through the passes beat,
And howled the mountain wolf.

We have all lingered with Longfellow, where

The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic—
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.



*"The rope-like pine-roots crosswise grown
Composed the network of his throne."*

And we know Lowell's "Pine-Tree," limned in grand relief
against the wilderness horizon of Maine :

Far up on Katahdin thou towerest,
Purple-blue with the distance and vast.

Where Aroostook, far-heard, seems to sob, as he goes
Groping down to the sea 'neath his mountainous snows;
Where the lumberers sit by the log-fires that throw
Their own threatening shadows far round o'er the snow,
When the wolf howls aloof, and the wavering glare
Flashes out from the blackness the eyes of the bear,
When the wood's huge recesses, half-lighted, supply
A canvas where Fancy her mad brush may try,
Blotting in giant horrors—

in the noon-twilight of primeval forests like these, Lowell has
learned, and shown us also, that the growth of the legend is
like the growth of the pine :

Its bony roots clutching around and across,
As if they would tear up earth's heart in their grasp,
Ere the storm should uproot them, or make them unclasp.

But Emerson's verse is so alive with the harmonies that surge
through the pines, it is almost as if the voice of the poet and
of the tree were one :

Waved the pine-tree through my thought,
And fanned the dreams it never brought.

So he sings ; and what has he not seen, as well as heard,

wandering in the deep woodlands, over lichens and mosses that
only half conceal

The rope-like pine-roots crosswise grown ?

Come, lift thine eyes to lofty rhymes,
Of things with things, of times with times,
Primal chimes of sun and shade,
Of sound and echo, man and maid,
The land reflected in the flood,
Body with shadow still pursued.

Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip thy paddle in the lake,
But it carves the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake.

He has elsewhere said that the " difference between landscape
and landscape is small, but there is great difference in beholders.
There is nothing so wonderful in any particular landscape as the
necessity of being beautiful under which every landscape lies."

Not every eye can see what a poet like Emerson beholds in
the manifold phases of Nature, each and all the expression of
one eternal thought ; not every one perceives, with him, how it
is that

All the forms are fugitive,
But the substances survive.
Ever fresh the broad creation,
A divine improvisation ;

and probably those whose lives are most barren, through the
beauty-blindness he so well describes, are least aware of their
inward lack :

When thou shalt climb the mountain-cliff,
 Or see the wide shore from thy skiff,
 To thee the horizon shall express
 Only emptiness and emptiness.

Alas! thine is the bankruptcy,
 Blessed Nature so to see!



*"By sunken reefs the hoarse sea roars;
 Above the shelving sands,
 Like skeletons, the sycamores
 Uplift their wasted hands."*

But many a one has felt, without knowing its meaning, that poet-stir in the heart which urges the hand of the artist to its work, whenever it is done purely and truly, while following the footsteps of the seer along

The unplanted forest-floor, whereon
 The all-seeing sun for ages hath not shone,

and beholding beauty spring up and glimmer around him, at once

his despair and his hope. And few can fail to appreciate graceful touches like that which makes us see

Beneath dim aisles, in odorous beds,
The slight Linnea hang its twin-born heads;

or that which, unveiling the woodland retreat of the Rhodora, assures us that—

If eyes were made for seeing,
Then beauty is its own excuse for being.

When we read Emerson's poetry, we can scarcely think of surfaces and outlines; we are in the very heart of Nature, and it does not occur to us to examine his verses as landscape-drawing. But the artist-power is there, nevertheless, the insight which is more than faculty, through which we are shown pictures so full of imaginative reality as to be ineffaceable. The truth is, he is so great a poet that we sometimes forget he is a poet at all; even as we live on in unconsciousness of the wonder-working illumination of universal sunlight around us. Rightly reading him, we feel that art and poetry are only true when at one with the central forces of Beauty and Power that uphold the universe.

But perhaps we are lingering too long among the pines. Other trees wave through the pages of our poets with every variety of Æolian rhythm, and other boughs outline themselves thereon before the reader's vision. No one among them has given us more delightful glimpses of his favorite leaf-embowered seclusion, or more definite characterization of the trees whose overshadowing he loves, than Lowell. A choice few among his

many beautiful poems of this kind are "Al Fresco," "The Beggar," "Under the Willows," and that perfect little idyl, "The Birch-Tree," beginning so breezily :

Rippling through thy branches goes the sunshine,
Among thy leaves that palpitate forever.

There is not space here even to suggest the numerous and beautiful pen-and-ink tree-sketches we remember. But we can show how, in one instance, artist and poet have both caught the weird outreach of scarred sycamore-boughs against a lonely sea and a darkening sky. It is Aldrich's "Twilight," where, in four short stanzas, we have a clear, strong landscape—a darkening autumnal day, illumined with one gleam from a solitary cottage :

By sunken reefs the hoarse sea roars ;
Above the shelving sands,
Like skeletons, the sycamores
Uplift their wasted hands.

In yonder cottage shines a light
Far-gleaming like a gem.—
Not fairer to the Rabbins' sight
Was star of Bethlehem.

In Stoddard's "November" there is a picture similar in its suggestions, though without the single ray of cheer :

A barren realm of withered fields ;
Bleak woods of fallen leaves ;
The palest morns that ever dawned ;
The dreariest of eves.

While it is true that poetry is a light which reveals deep shadows, it is also true that the eye not seldom creates the picture it sees ; and many a one, gazing where

Gaunt shadows stretch along the hill,

may regard the dark tracery of interlacing boughs but as a network through which the glow of sunset is revealed, and strength is added to the firm outlines of the seaward-slanting hillside. Still "the pathos of the falling leaf" is as positive a reality as



"Gaunt shadows stretch along the hill."

the transparency of June sunshine, lighting up thousand-fold blossoming meadows and woods.

We have among our poets those who can elaborate pictures as delicate as the spinning of dew and gossamer across the light grass on a breezeless summer morning, as well as those who, by a stroke of their mighty magic, can make the world broaden and the heavens deepen upon our vision.

Let us be thankful for each—for every cunning and every powerful hand that can uplift the veil from the earth whereon we dwell, and make visible the beauty in which it was created, and is immortally clothed !

IV.



*"It touched the wood-bird's folded wing,
And said, 'O Bird, awake and sing!'"*

SOUTHWARD from the granite bluffs, the deep, rocky gorges and sandy coves of Cape Ann, in Massachusetts—a region concerning which many a legend has been woven into the songs of our poets—beyond the rugged cliffs of Marblehead, and the broken shores of Swampscott, the peninsula of Nahant

reaches by its beach-causeway into the sea—a long, yellow finger poising a rough emerald on its tip—two emeralds, rather—for there is a Great Nahant and a Little Nahant. The grandeur of the sea-views, and the wild beauty of the shores, as well as the near neighborhood of the city of Boston, have always attracted visitors to the place, which has now grown into a suburban village, a summer resort more and more thronged every year.

Prominent among the distinguished people who for many years made this their retreat during the heated months, are the names of Agassiz and Longfellow. The latter is at present of especial interest to us, because of songs of his which reveal unmistakably the inspiration of winds and waves that beat against the storm-worn buttresses of Nahant. But the memory of his great-hearted friend and neighbor, the world-renowned naturalist, resounds through the hoarse moan of the surges, in the poet's lines :

I stand again on the familiar shore,
And hear the waves of the distracted sea
Piteously calling and lamenting thee,
And waiting restless at thy cottage-door.

The rocks, the sea-weed on the ocean-floor,
The willows in the meadow, and the free
Wild winds of the Atlantic welcome me :
Then why shouldst thou be dead, and come no more?

The sorrow of earth blends all too readily with the eternal sadness of the sea, and, when the pain of bereavement has pierced to the inmost being, visions appear, memories arise, and the wide green earth and the gray blank of ocean are each but as a can-

vas for pictures thrilled into life by that awakening—beautiful, tender, and solemn as the infinite mysteries wherewith life is surrounded. Some magician's wand seems moving among the mists and clouds of the far horizon, evoking phantasmal colors and outlines from the gleaming expanse, as we read "Palin-genesis":

I lay upon the headland height, and listened
 To the incessant sobbing of the sea .
 In caverns under me,
 And watched the waves, that tossed, and fled, and glistened
 Until the rolling meadows of amethyst
 Melted away in mist.

Then suddenly, as one from sleep, I started ;
 For round about me all the sunny capes
 Seemed peopled with the shapes
 Of those whom I had known in days departed,
 Appareled in the loveliness which gleams
 On faces seen in dreams.

A moment only, and the light and glory
 Faded away, and the disconsolate shore
 Stood lonely as before ;
 And the wild roses of the promontory
 Around me shuddered in the wind, and shed
 Their petals of pale red.

"Oh, give me back," I cried, "the vanished splendors,
 The breath of morn, and the exultant strife
 When the swift stream of life
 Bounds o'er its rocky channels, and surrenders

The pond, with all its lilies, for the leap
Into the unknown deep !”

And the sea answered with a lamentation,
Like some old prophet wailing, and it said,
“ Alas ! thy youth is dead !”

Longfellow gives us other touches of the sea-feeling which has stirred his thoughts to expression in this locality, less overpowering in their pathos, yet all profoundly sympathetic with the unrest which is one of the chief fascinations of ocean-scenery. From the headlands of Nahant he has listened to the bells of Lynn ; and he sings :

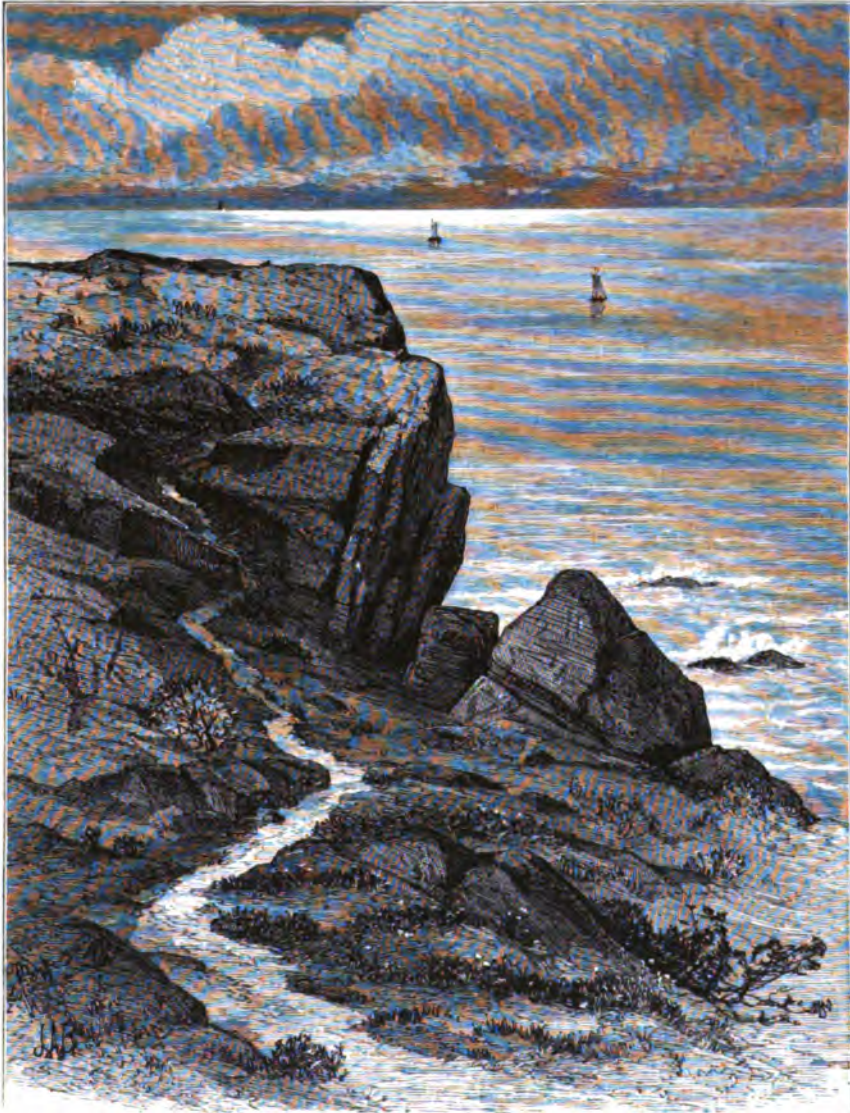
O curfew of the setting sun ! O Bells of Lynn !
O requiem of the dying day !
O Bells of Lynn !

From the dark belfries of yon cloud-cathedral wafted
Your sounds ærial seem to float,
O Bells of Lynn !

The fisherman in his boat far out beyond the headland,
Listens, and leisurely rows ashore,
O Bells of Lynn !

Over the shining sands the wandering cattle homeward
Follow each other at your call,
O Bells of Lynn !

And down the darkening coast run the tumultuous surges,
And clap their hands and shout to you,
O Bells of Lynn !



*"I lay upon the headland height, and listened
To the incessant sobbing of the sea."*

Farther up the shore—yet not many miles farther—is the view the poet looked out upon from beside "The Fire of Driftwood"—of the roofs and steeples of Marblehead, and the surrounding sea :

We sat within the farmhouse old,
 Whose windows, looking o'er the bay,
 Gave to the sea-breeze, damp and cold,
 An easy entrance, night and day.

Not far away we saw the port,
 The strange, old-fashioned, silent town ;
 The lighthouse, the dismantled fort,
 The wooden houses, quaint and brown.

We sat and talked until the night,
 Descending, filled the little room ;
 Our faces faded from the sight ;
 Our voices only broke the gloom.

The very tones in which we spake
 Had something strange, I could but mark ;
 The leaves of memory seemed to make
 A mournful rustling in the dark.

Oft died the words upon our lips,
 As suddenly, from out the fire,
 Built of the wreck of stranded ships,
 The flames would leap and then expire.

And as their splendor flashed and failed,
 We thought of wrecks upon the main ;
 Of ships dismasted, that were hailed,
 And sent no answer back again.

As there is something indescribably delicious in the blending
 of sea-scents with inland odors from forest, meadow, and garden,
 so there are poems and pictures throughout which the atmos-

phere of wave and shore is marvelously interfused, giving us a sense of deep sweetness in wide breathing-room—the delight, almost, of entering into a new existence. Longfellow's "Day-break" is one of these :

A wind came up out of the sea,
And said, "O Mists, make room for me!"

It hailed the ships, and cried, "Sail on,
Ye mariners, the night is gone!"

It said unto the forest, "Shout!
Hang all your leafy banners out!"

It touched the wood-bird's folded wing,
And said, "O Bird, awake and sing!"

It crossed the churchyard with a sigh,
And said, "Not yet! In quiet lie!"

The poem ends with the inevitable sadness, but what glory of unimaginable dawn is hidden in that "Not yet!"

We turn from the gloom of the night-infolded sea to songs of the fair, blooming land, and to never-wearying portrayals of spring, glad to refresh ourselves with suggestions of green fields and running streams, even though reminded that—

It is not always May."

Here, again, it is Longfellow who charms us with a glimpse of the awakening year :

The sun is bright, the air is clear,
The darting swallows soar and sing,

And from the stately elms I hear
The bluebirds prophesying spring.



*"The sun is bright, the air is clear,
The darting swallows soar and sing."*

So blue yon winding river flows,
It seems an outlet from the sky
Where, waiting till the west wind blows,
The freighted clouds at anchor lie.

All things are new—the buds, the leaves,
That gild the elm-tree's nodding crest;
And e'en the nest beneath the eaves—
There are no birds in last year's nest!

Spring landscapes open on the pages of all our poets, although, writing from New England latitudes, many of them can but repeat the unwilling, half-withdrawn promise with which that season approaches us. Certain it is that—

The spring comes slowly up this way,

and Lowell is justified in his assertion that—

May is a pious fraud of the almanac.

Perhaps most of our poets look for her too early, accepting the traditional May-day of milder climates; for one can not confidently say that spring is here until just as May is passing into June. But all the more stimulating to the imagination are the lovely days that suddenly gleam in upon us after long delays and tantalizing disappearances—such mornings as Longfellow has sung of:

O gift of God! O perfect day,
Whereon shall no man work, but play!
Whereon it is enough for me
Not to be doing, but to be!
Blow, winds! and waft through all the rooms
The snow-flakes of the cherry-blooms!
Blow, winds! and bend within my reach
The fiery blossoms of the peach!

A spring-picture without birds would be very incomplete. But see them and hear them in the opening verses of the "Birds of Killingworth":

It was the season when, through all the land,
The merle and mavis build; and, building, sing

Those lovely lyrics written by His hand,
 Whom Saxon Cædmon calls the Blithe-heart King ;
 When on the boughs the purple buds expand,
 The banners of the vanguard of the spring ;
 And rivulets, rejoicing, rush and leap,
 And wave their fluttering signals from the steep.

The robin and the bluebird, piping loud,
 Filled all the blossoming orchards with their glee ;
 The sparrows chirped as if they still were proud
 Their race in Holy Writ should mentioned be ;
 And hungry crows, assembled in a crowd,
 Clamored their piteous prayer incessantly,
 Knowing who hears the ravens cry, and said,
 "Give us, O Lord, this day our daily bread !"

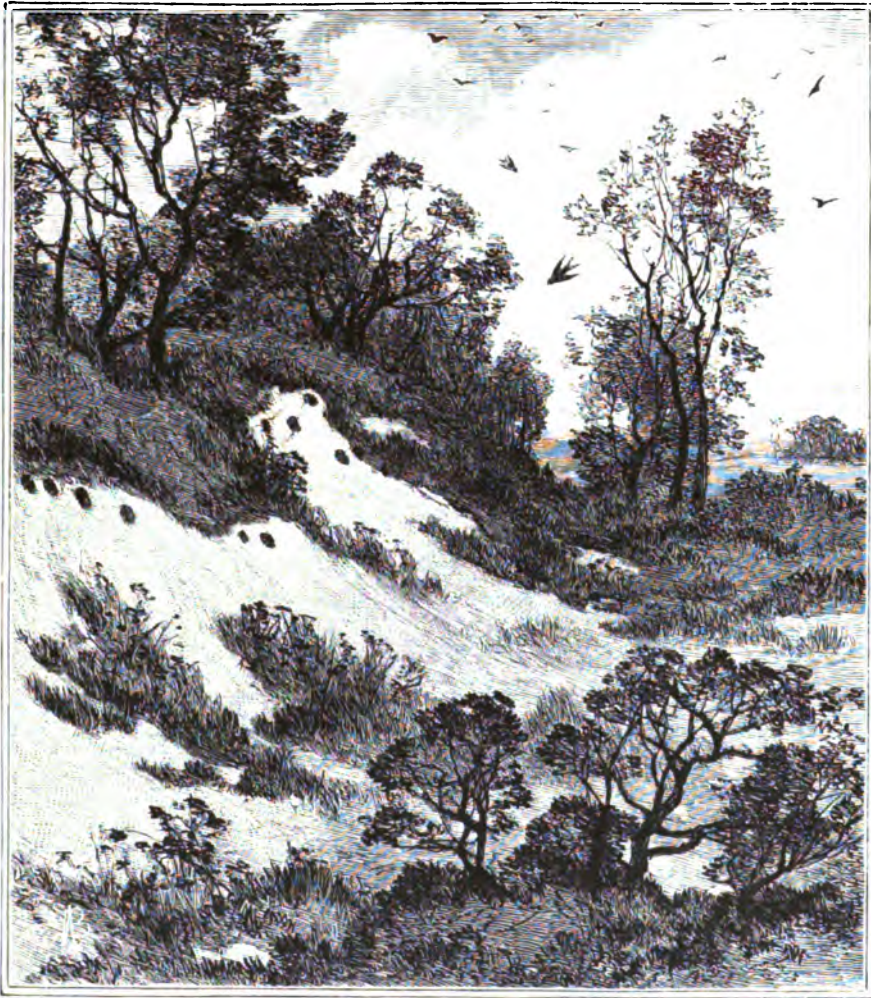
The thrush that carols at the dawn of day,
 From the green steeples of the piny wood ;
 The oriole in the elm, the noisy jay,
 Jargoning like a foreigner at his food :

The ballad-singers and the Troubadours,
 The street-musicians of the heavenly city—
 The birds, who make sweet music for us all
 In our dark hours, as David did for Saul :

Whose habitations in the tree-tops even,
 Are half-way houses on the road to heaven.

Longfellow's tender and graceful fancies are as enchanting as the notes of singing-birds from many lands ; and the scenery of his verse is equally varied. There is scarcely a country which is

not made more beautiful to us by some song of his. One travels as on a sunbeam, in his poetry, from the stormy Scandinavian



*"Gossiping out of the bank flew myriad twittering swallows ;
And on the boughs of the sycamores quarreled and chattered the blackbirds."*

fiords to the gleaming Rhine, and the bright waters of the Mediterranean, or across our own wide continent—the home of Hiawatha and the scene of Evangeline's wanderings ; and every

American is proud of the world-wide recognition his exquisite minstrelsy has deservedly received.

Not many of our poets have written of the West from the outlook of a residence there ; but one of them—Howells—is the author of some very charming poems illustrative of that region. If these have sometimes been overlooked, it is, perhaps, because of his fame as a still more charming novelist than poet. His “Movers” has something of the pensive sweetness of “Hermann and Dorothea.” It is the story of a family leaving their old home, and emigrating yet farther westward :

Parting was over at last, and all the good-byes had been spoken ;
Up the long hillside-road the white-tented wagon moved slowly,
Bearing the mother and children, while onward before them the father
Trudged with his gun on his arm, and the faithful house-dog beside
him,
Grave and sedate, as if knowing the sorrowful thoughts of his master.

Sweet was the smell of the dewy leaves and the flowers in the wild-
wood ;

Fair the long reaches of sun and shade in the aisles of the forest ;
Glad of the spring, and of love, and of morning, the wild-birds were
singing ;

Jays to each other called harshly, then mellowly fluted together ;
Sang the oriole songs as golden and gay as his plumage ;
Pensively piped the querulous quails their greetings unfrequent ;

Gossiping out of the bank flew myriad twittering swallows ;
And on the boughs of the sycamores quarreled and chattered the black-
birds.

The brightness and freshness of that Western April dawn, and the picturesque group gazing upon their old home from the hilltop, make a pastoral sketch full of lovely local color :

Long together they gazed on the beautiful valley before them,
 Looked on the well-known fields that stretched away to the woodlands,
 Where, in the dark lines of green, showed the milk-white crest of the
 dogwood,
 Snow of wild-plums in bloom, and the crimson tints of the red-bud—
 Looked on the pasture-fields, where the cattle were leisurely grazing ;
 Soft, and sweet, and thin, came the faint, far notes of the cow-bells—
 Looked on the oft-trodden lanes, with their elder and blackberry borders,
 Looked on the orchard, a bloomy sea, with its billows of blossoms.
 Fair was the scene, yet suddenly strange, and all unfamiliar,
 As are the faces of friends when the word of farewell has been spoken.
 Long together they gazed ; then at last on the little log-cabin,
 Home for so many years, now home no longer for ever,
 Rested their tearless eyes in the silent rapture of anguish.

As English verse blossoms with hawthorn-hedgerows, and makes us familiar with spring-time in the mother-country, although we may never have seen it, so our poets delight in the roadside glory of apple-orchards in bloom, concerning which they can never be too eloquent. Bryant's "Planting of the Apple-Tree" hints it all, and these stanzas from Howells's "Spring-time" give us a glimpse of the rose-tinted May splendor, with which most readers are familiar :

Behold the wonder, O silence !
 Strange as if wrought in a night,
 The waited and lingering glory,
 The world-old, fresh delight !

O blossoms that hang like winter,
 Drifted upon the trees,
 O birds that sing in the blossoms,
 O blossom-haunting bees—

O green, green leaves in the branches,
 O shadowy dark below,
 O cool of the aisles of orchards,
 Woods that the wild-flowers know—



*"O blossoms that hang like winter,
 Drifted upon the trees."*

O air of gold and perfume
 Wind, breathing sweet, and sun—
 O sky of perfect azure—
 Day, heaven, and earth, in one!

It is no wonder that the poets, from Chaucer to our own time—childlike old Chaucer, with his hands full of daisies, and his heart dancing to the motion of the tremulous, “glad, light-green” leaves of the bursting forest-boughs—should sing, as the birds do their sweetest songs, when filled with the ecstasy of spring. On their pages one usually finds more satisfactory pictures of the season than on canvas; for what pigment can reproduce the inundating sunshine, almost without shadow, or the floods of woodland melody from brook, and bird, and breeze, which are the life of the lovely time? And, for contrasts of blooming freshness with the pallor and darkness of winter—the glow against the chill—we look to no region of perpetual spring, but to the north, where song is an ever-repeated resurrection in the singer’s heart, that knows no more of age than the new-born year. So carols one of our poets for the whole brotherhood:

Spring still makes spring in the mind,
 When sixty years are told;
 Love wakes anew this throbbing heart,
 And we are never old.
 Over the winter glaciers
 I see the summer glow,
 And, through the wild-piled snow-drifts,
 The warm rose-buds below.

V.



*"Darker and darker
The black shadows fall."*

WE seek summer landscapes in poetry, as elsewhere, for coolness, for soothing, for seclusion, and peace. And we feel these elements, with some of our singers, in the very flow of their verse. The rhythms of Nature glide through their measures when they sing of her, and their flowers and trees spring into being to the tones of some subtile, all-harmonizing music, even as do hers. For the blossoms whose home is in quiet, green nooks, beside lakelet or cascade, or

Where rivulets dance their wayward round—

growing up, as did Wordsworth's maiden, "in sun and shower,"
to embody the enchantments of their birthplace, are in their
Naiad-like freshness mutely eloquent with the

Beauty born of murmuring sound,

which passes into their looks, as the poet makes it

Pass into her face.

Such a blossom is the "Flower-de-Luce" of Longfellow—

Dwelling by still rivers

Or solitary mere,

Or where the sluggish meadow-brook delivers

Its waters to the weir.

No matter if man has come near with his noisy inventions,
the azure flag-lily sits undisturbed beside her mirroring pool:

Thou laughest at the mill, the whirr and worry

Of spindle and of loom,

And the great wheel that toils amid the hurry

And rushing of the flume.

Born in the purple, born to joy and pleasance,

Thou dost not toil nor spin,

But makest glad and radiant with thy presence

The meadow and the lin.

The burnished dragon-fly is thine attendant,

And tilts against the field,

And down the listed sunbeam rides resplendent,
 With steel-blue mail and shield.

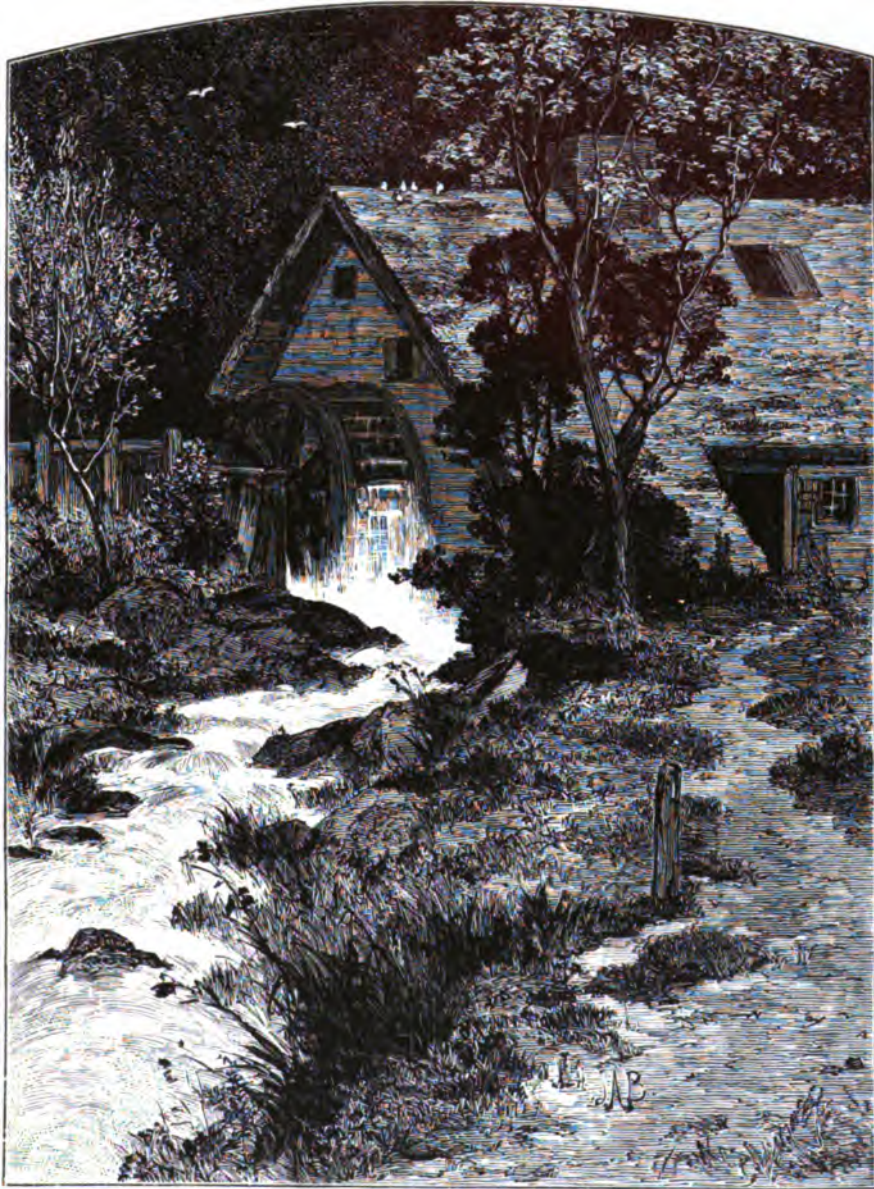
Thou art the Iris fair among the fairest,
 Who, armed with golden rod,
 And winged with the celestial azure, bearest
 The message of some god.

Whether or not this Iris may be the same flower that illumines
 the text of Phebe Cary's "Field-Preaching," hers, too, has a
 presence and a message worth attention :

And the right royal lily, putting on
 Her robes, more rich than those of Solomon,
 Opened her gorgeous missal in the sun,
 And thanked Him soft and low,
 Whose gracious, liberal hand had clothed her so.

Sometimes we meet with a poem from an unfamiliar author,
 which, by its beauty, reminds us that now, as always, some of
 the most poetic natures may be living unheard of and unseen
 in their chosen retirement, like the flowers and streams they sing
 of. Such a poem is "Birch-Stream," bearing the signature of
 Anna Boynton Averill :

At noon, within the dusty town,
 Where the wild river rushes down,
 And thunders hoarsely all day long,
 I think of thee, my hermit stream,
 Low singing in thy summer dream
 Thine idle, sweet, old, tranquil song.



*" And the great wheel that toils amid the hurry
And rushing of the flume."*

Northward, Katahdin's chasmèd pile
Looms through thy low, long, leafy aisle ;

Eastward, Olamon's summit shines ;
 And I, upon thy grassy shore,
 The dreamful, happy child of yore,
 Worship before mine olden shrines.

Again the sultry noontide hush
 Is sweetly broken by the thrush,
 Whose clear bell rings and dies away
 Beside thy banks, in coverts deep,
 Where nodding buds of orchis sleep
 In dusk, and dream not it is day.

Again the wild cow-lily floats
 Her golden freighted, tented boats
 In thy cool coves of softened gloom,
 O'ershadowed by the whispering reed,
 And purple plumes of pickerel-weed,
 And meadow-sweet in tangled bloom.

The startled minnows dart in flocks
 Beneath thy glimmering amber rocks,
 If but a zephyr stir the brake ;
 The silent swallow swoops, a flash
 Of light—and leaves, with dainty plash,
 A ring of ripples in her wake.

Poets and painters love the meadow-sweet, as they should,
 for its name does not belie its unpretending summer loveliness.
 A glimpse and a waft of it come to us from the pen of **George**
Arnold :

The creamy banks of meadow-sweet
 Along the mill-stream's margin grow,

Where honey-bees with pollened feet
Hum softly to and fro.

The sound is sweet, the fragrance rare,
As summer breezes float along ;
And round me, all the summer air
Is full of scent and song.

There are trees which have in them the ripple of running
brooks, and one of them is the birch, which Lowell has made
so like a living being in its shy, tremulous gracefulness :

Upon the brink of some wood-nestled lakelet,
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a Dryad,
Dripping about thy slim white stem, whose shadow
Slopes quivering down the water's dusky quiet,
Thou shrink'st, as on her bath's edge would some startled Dryad.

Whether my heart with hope or sorrow tremble,
Thou sympathizest still ; wild and unquiet,
I fling me down ; thy ripple, like a river
Flows valleyward, where calmness is, and by it
My heart is floated down into the land of quiet.

And we can not turn away from rivulets, and lakes, and mill-
streams, without reminding ourselves of the same poet's " Beaver
Brook," for scarcely another streamlet flows through our native
verse with so sweet a charm :

Warm noon brims full the valley's cup,
The aspen's leaves are scarce astir ;
Only the little mill sends up
Its busy, never-ceasing burr.



*"Of waters blue
That from the distance sparkle
through
Some woodland gap."*



*"Upon the brink of some wood-nestled lakelet,
Thy foliage, like the tresses of a Dryad."*

Beneath a long buttonwood
 The mill's red door lets forth the din ;
 The whitened miller, dust-imbued,
 Flits past the square of dark within.

No mountain torrent's strength is here ;
 Sweet Beaver, child of forest still,
 Heaps its small pitcher to the ear,
 And gently waits the miller's will.

The miller dreams not at what cost
 The quivering mill-stones hum and whirl,
 Nor how for every turn are tost
 Armfuls of diamond and of pearl.

Not unlike the meanderings of a brook are the windings of many a country road, bordered with blossoming thickets, and leaning trees, and opening upon unexpected vistas of lovely scenery. More suggestive, indeed, are the changes of the foot-path or the highway, as revealing more traces of the human life which has made there its pilgrimage or encampment. And, in itself, what is more picturesque than an ancient, deserted thoroughfare, where brambles and moss-grown rocks, old willows and lichen-draped fences, and wild-roses entangled with nodding ferns, have it all their own way by right of undisturbed possession? For something very delightful of this kind, one seldom need go far to seek, anywhere in the country.

Only a bit of the highway, sunning itself on the hill ;
 By it the beautiful river, singing a song in the mill.

Only a bit of the highway I see as I sit by the door ;
And the valley is pleasant behind it, and the valley is pleasant before—

sings Hiram Rich, whose songs, if neither many nor widely known, are very sweet. And Bryant leads us through one of his lovely wood-paths by a most delicate thread of music :

From the dusty path there opens,
Eastward, an unknown way ;
Above its windings pleasantly
The woodland branches play.

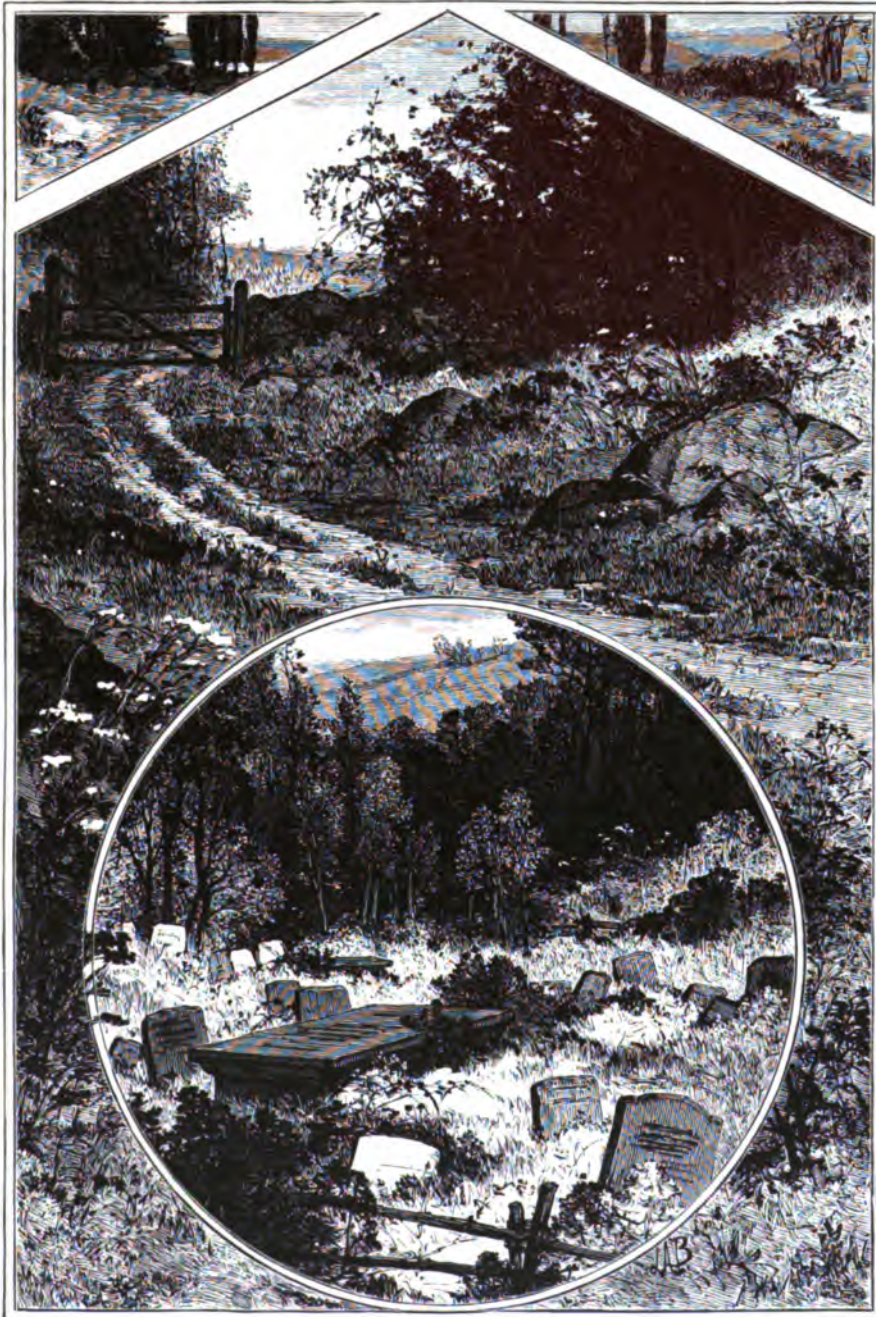
A silvery brook comes stealing
From the shadow of the trees,
Where slender herbs of the forest stoop
Before the entering breeze

Along those pleasant windings
I would my journey lay,
Where the shade is cool, and the dew of night
Is not yet dried away.

And where does such another “Gleam of Sunshine” fall, as on the wayside picture so familiar to us through the beautiful lines of Longfellow ?—

Here runs the highway to the town ;
There the green lane descends,
Through which I walked to church with thee,
O gentlest of my friends !

The shadow of the linden-trees
Lay moving on the grass ;



*"Through the green lanes of the country,
 Pause by some neglected graveyard,
 For a while to muse, and ponder."*

Between them and the moving boughs,
A shadow, thou didst pass.

I saw the branches of the trees
Bend down thy touch to meet,
The clover-blossoms in the grass
Rise up to kiss thy feet.

But it is not always sunlit openings, and living forms like this fair human vision, that one sees by the rural roadside. The same sweet singer gives us, elsewhere, a hint of the gloomier shadow which falls across our accustomed paths :

Ye who sometimes, in your rambles
Through the green lanes of the country,
Where the tangled barberry-bushes
Hang their tufts of crimson berries
Over stone walls gray with mosses,
Pause by some neglected graveyard,
For a while to muse, and ponder
On a half-effaced inscription
Written with little skill of song-craft,
Homely phrases, but each letter
Full of hope and full of heart-break—

and, one and all, we recognize ourselves as included among the saunterers or wayfarers addressed.

A country burial-place ! How unlike the flower-strewn greenness, the cloistered seclusion of an old English churchyard, is the scene that is suggested by those words ! Arid and shadeless, its rudely-inclosed desolation makes us shudder as over our own coming fate, hinting so forcibly the neglect which follows forget-

fulness when we pass from human sight. And sometimes the ungracious hand of well-meaning Care exaggerates its bareness by interfering with the wild ministries of Nature, who seldom performs her wayside work for the living or the dead in any unlovely way. When left to herself, she does her best to render these deserted retreats picturesque.

The poet Whittier has truthfully sketched "The Old Burying-Ground":

Our vales are sweet with fern and rose ;
 Our hills are maple-crowned ;
 But not from them our fathers chose
 The village burying-ground.

The dreariest spot in all the land
 To death they set apart ;
 With scanty grace from Nature's hand,
 And none from that of Art.

A winding wall of mossy stone,
 Frost-flung and broken, lines
 A lonesome acre thinly grown
 With grass and wandering vines.

Without the wall the birch-tree shows
 Its drooped and tasseled head ;
 Within, a stag-horned sumach grows,
 Fern-leafed, with spikes of red.

Low moans the river from its bed ;
 The distant pines reply ;
 Like mourners shrinking from the dead,
 They stand apart and sigh.

.

Yet still the wilding flowers would grow,
 The golden leaves would fall,
 The seasons come, the seasons go,
 And God be good to all.

Above the graves the blackberry hung
 In bloom and green its wreath ;
 And harebells swung as if they rung
 The chimes of peace beneath.

The beauty Nature loves to share,
 The gifts she hath for all,
 The common light, the common air,
 O'er-crept the graveyard's wall !

Upon all graves the sunset shadows fall gently and solemnly,
 through the tolling of twilight winds—the only “curfew ” known
 to our shores, except that rung by some minstrel's hand, unless
 we can hear a mediæval echo in the ringing of the village nine
 o'clock bell :

Cover the embers,
 And put out the light ;
 Toil comes with the morning,
 And rest with the night.

Song sinks into silence ;
 The story is told ;
 The windows are darkened,
 The hearthstone is cold.

Darker and darker
 The black shadows fall ;
 Sleep and oblivion
 Reign over all.

The darkness of the last shadowing sleep which everywhere makes sharp contrast with the brightness of sunshine and the



*"The rising moon has hid the stars;
Her level rays, like golden bars,
Lie on the landscape green."*

gladness of living creatures, can not be left out of a landscape traversed by human feet, but it almost always harmonizes itself with the sheltering peace of Nature. In "Thanatopsis," the glory

of the visible universe enrobes man, sinking to his final slumber on the bosom of earth ; and every poet, whose inner vision is unclouded, brings some ray to soften the gloom :

Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through the cypress-trees !
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play !

Returning from reveries too somber, there is cheer in the mild illumination of moonlight, which infolds earth as in a dream. The half-unreal shapes and tints around us, the mystical atmosphere which invests everything, are as dim, far-off hints of the coming dawn, which, were it not daily repeated, would be a miracle too radiant for belief.

Under the rays of the moon, our common trodden footpaths look phantasmal. The wonder-world of myth and faerie seems not an impossible creation, amid the illusions of moonlight, wherein the landmarks of our every-day outlook are lost. Who shall say, lingering in the spell of that glamour, that the legend of Endymion was a fable only ?

The rising moon has hid the stars ;
Her level rays, like golden bars,
Lie on the landscape green,
With shadows brown between.

And silver white the river gleams,
As if Diana, in her dreams,
Had dropped her silver bow
Upon the meadows low.

What moonlight is by a lake-side, by the beautiful lake which the former dusky tenantry of our hills and woods poetically named "The Smile of the Great Spirit," has been outlined for us in Whittier's verses :

Yon mountain's side is black with night,
 While, broad-orbed, o'er its gleaming crown,
 The moon, slow rounding into sight,
 On the hushed inland sea looks down.

How start to light the clustering isles,
 Each silver-hemmed ! How sharply show
 The shadows of their rocky piles
 And tree-tops in the wave below !

How far and strange the mountains seem,
 Dim looming through the pale, still light !
 The vague, vast grouping of a dream,
 They stretch into the solemn night.

Winding streamlets, woodland pools and waterfalls, embowered roadsides, and the soft glow of moonlight upon the resting-places of the living and the dead—these are not peculiar to any country—these are to be found everywhere. But, because universal, they are not less American. And the pictures herein gathered have an interest of their own, as showing in what loving manner native singer and artist have sketched peaceful nooks and by-ways, such as the poets of all lands have delighted to wreath about with song.

VI.



*"Hark! from the moss-clung apple-bough
Beyond the tumbled wall, there broke
That gurgling music of the May—
'Twas the first robin spoke!"*

IN that subtile combination of sentiment, fancy, and insight which gives poetry a touch of glamour, wherein illusion and truth are so blended that it seems as if one could not be without the other, none among our poets surpasses Lowell. There is a shimmer of mirage upon his pictures :

The light that never was on sea or land

illuminates and transfigures Nature under the magic of his pen. In this respect we may say that, of all our poets, he is most poetical.

Enter with him into his "woodland enchanted," where in "The Fountain of Youth" he sees his childhood's face again—a real forest, and a real little spring bubbling up among its rocks and mosses, yet how mystically lighted :

'Tis a woodland enchanted !
 By no sadder spirit
 Than blackbirds and thrushes
 That whistle to cheer it
 All day in the bushes,
 This woodland is haunted :
 And in a small clearing,
 Beyond sight or hearing
 Of human annoyance,
 The little fount gushes,
 First smoothly, then dashes
 And gurgles and flashes,
 To the maples and ashes
 Confiding its joyance.

'Tis a woodland enchanted !
 The great August noonlight
 Through myriad rifts slanted,
 Leaf and bole thickly sprinkles
 With flickering gold.
 There, in warm August gloaming,
 With quick, silent brightenings
 From meadow-lands roaming,
 The firefly twinkles
 His fitful heat-lightnings :
 There the magical moonlight

With meek, saintly glory
 Steeps summit and wold.

'Tis a woodland enchanted !
 A vast silver willow,
 I know not how planted—
 (This wood is enchanted,
 And full of surprises),
 Stands stemming a billow,
 A motionless billow
 Of ankle-deep mosses.
 Two great roots it crosses
 To make a round basin ;
 And there the fount rises ;
 Oh, too pure a mirror
 For one sick of error
 To see his sad face in !

By my step unaffrighted,
 A thrush hops before it,
 And o'er it
 A birch hangs delighted,
 Dipping, dipping, dipping its tremulous hair.

One must read the whole poem to get at the heart of its beauty ; there is in poetry scarcely such another glimpse of Nature, as it appears to an idealizing child's vision, unless we may find it in Mrs. Browning's "Lost Bower." From both we may learn, if we did not know it before, that a poet is such from the very beginning—from infancy itself, awake to the heaven that lies about him. Almost any forest would have been fairy-land



*" 'Tis a woodland enchanted !
By no sadder spirit
Than blackbirds and thrushes
That whistle to cheer it."*

to the moods of such children as Elizabeth Barrett and James Russell Lowell.

Back to the breezy delights and the rapturous freedom of his childhood, Lowell is again and again transported by the loveliness of the outer world: is not the poet indeed the immortal child? The blossoms of early summer lure him from his studies as they would any schoolboy:

The dandelions and buttercups
Gild all the lawn; the drowsy bee
Stumbles among the clover-tops,
And summer sweetens all but me.
Away, unfruitful lore of books,
For whose vain idiom we reject
The soul's more native dialect,
Aliens among the birds and brooks,
Dull to interpret or conceive
What gospels lost the woods retrieve!

Snap, chord of manhood's tender strain!
To-day I will be a boy again!
The mind's pursuing element,
Like a bow slackened and unbent,
In some dark corner shall be leant.
The robin sings, as of old, from the limb!
The catbird croons in the lilac-bush!
Through the dim arbor, himself more dim,
Silently hops the hermit-thrush.

O unestrangèd birds and bees!
O face of Nature always true!
O never unsympathizing trees!

O never rejecting roof of blue !
 Methinks my heart from each of these
 Plucks part of childhood back again.
 Once more I am admitted peer
 In the upper house of Nature here,
 And feel through all my pulses run
 The royal blood of breeze and sun !

And how this poet's heart warms to the sweetness of our
 loveliest month—the month which keeps youth and poetry alive
 in the shivering North !—

June is the pearl of our New England year.
 Still a surprisal, though expected long,
 Her coming startles. Long she lies in wait,
 Makes many a feint, peeps forth, draws coyly back,
 Then, from some southern ambush in the sky,
 With one great gush of blossoms storms the world.

June is full of invitations sweet,
 Forth from the chimney's yawn and thrice-read tomes,
 To leisurely delights and sauntering thoughts
 That brook no ceiling narrower than the blue.
 The cherry, dressed for bridal, at my pane
 Brushes, then listens, *Will he come ?* The bee
 All dusty as a miller, takes his toll
 Of powdery gold, and grumbles. What a day
 To sun me, and do nothing !

Hush ! 'tis he !

My oriole, my glance of summer fire
 Is come at last !



*"It winds athwart the windy hill,
Through fallow slopes of upland bare."*

Within-doors, Fancy has her own avenues of escape. Dream-land opens to him through every window-pane. The lightest suggestion—a peep of blue sky—a thread of a pathway winding up a hill (but, indeed, what outlet for the imagination is like that of an ascending hill-slope, beyond which one knows not what wonders of earth and heaven may lie waiting to be revealed?)—any least hint lifts him as on wings into realms of unimaginable beauty.

Perhaps no poem of Lowell's illustrates this peculiar and unequaled quality of his better than "The Foot-path," in every way one of the most exquisite among all he has written :

It winds athwart the windy hill,
 Through sallow slopes of upland bare,
 And Fancy climbs, with footfall still,
 Its narrowing curves that end in air.

By day a warmer-hearted blue
 Stoops softly to that topmost swell :
 Its thread-like windings seem a clew
 To gracious climes where all is well.

By night, far yonder, I surmise
 An ampler world than clips my ken,
 Where the great stars of happier skies
 Commingle nobler fates of men.

The bird I list hath never come
 Within the scope of mortal ear :
 My prying step would make him dumb,
 And the fair tree, his shelter, sear.

Behind the hill, behind the sky,
 Behind my inmost thought he sings :
 No feet avail ; to hear it nigh,
 The song itself must lend the wings.

Sing on, sweet bird, close hid, and raise
 Those angel-stairways in my brain,
 That climb from these low-vaulted days
 To spacious sunshines far from pain !

City of Elf-land, just without
 Our seeing, marvel ever new,
 Glimpsed in fair weather, a sweet doubt
 Sketched in, mirage-like, on the blue.

I build thee in yon sunset cloud,
 Whose edge allures to climb the height;
 I hear thy drowned bells, inly-loud,
 From still pools dusk with dreams of night.

Something of the same illusive charm we find in Emerson's
 "Forerunners":

Long I followed happy guides;
 I could never reach their sides.
 Keen my sense, my heart was young,
 Right good-will my sinews strung,
 But no speed of mine avails
 To hunt upon their shining trails.

On eastern hills I see their smokes
 Mixed with mist by distant lochs.

Their near camp my spirit knows
 By signs gracious as rainbows.

And it glimpses upon us again in Whittier's "Vanishers," the
 echo of an Indian legend:

From the clefts of mountain rocks,
 Through the dark of lowland firs
 Flash the eyes and flow the locks
 Of the mystic vanishers!

And the fisher in his skiff,
 And the hunter on the moss,
 Hear their call from cape and cliff,
 See their hands the birch-leaves toss.

Doubt who may, O friend of mine,
 Thou and I have seen them too ;
 On before, with beck and sign,
 Still they glide, and we pursue.

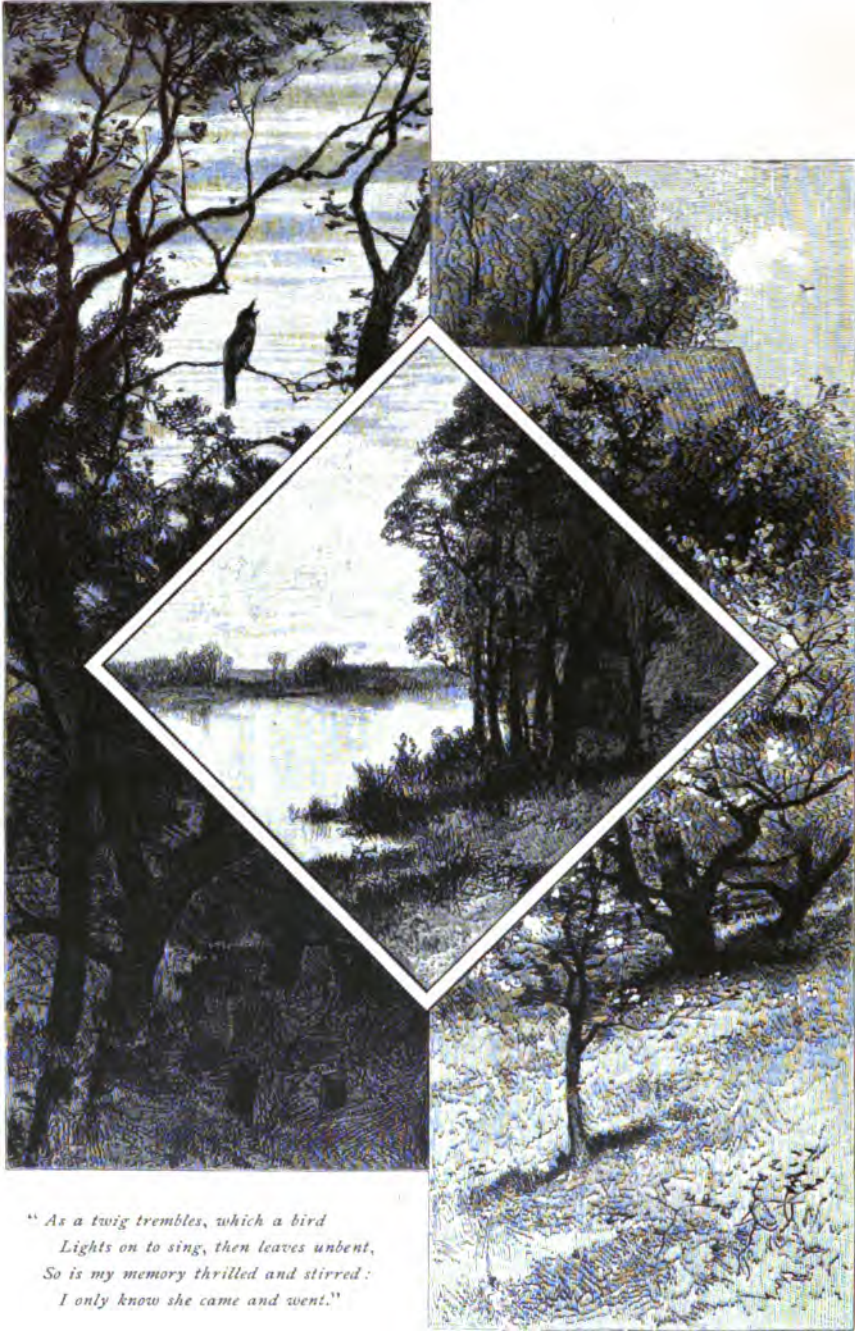
More than clouds of purple trail
 In the gold of setting day ;
 More than gleams of wing or sail
 Beckon from the sea-mist gray—

Beauty that eludes our grasp ;
 Sweetness that transcends our taste ;
 Loving hands we may not clasp ;
 Shining feet that mock our haste.

Airily delicate as a bird's flight is the movement of some of the half-hinted human forms that flit through Lowell's verses. The same fairy glamour is over them that clings like a film of mist to his landscape outlines. He suggests them to us in metaphors drawn from the swift and transient grace we have so often recognized in familiar Nature :

As a twig trembles, which a bird
 Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
 So is my memory thrilled and stirred :
 I only know she came and went.

As clasps some lake, by gusts unriven,
 The blue dome's measureless content,
 So my soul holds that moment's heaven :
 I only know she came and went.



*"As a twig trembles, which a bird
Lights on to sing, then leaves unbent,
So is my memory thrilled and stirred:
I only know she came and went."*

*"As clasps some lake, by gusts unriven
The blue dome's measureless content."*

*"As, at one bound, our swift spring heaps
The orchards full of bloom and scent."*

As, at one bound, our swift spring heaps
 The orchards full of bloom and scent,
 So clove her May my wintry sleeps :
 I only know she came and went.

Although the charm of dreamy remoteness wavers so often over the scenery and the personages of Lowell's verse, the earth is firm beneath it all. We know the landscape—the banks of the Charles—the stately elms that embower his study, and the brook that sometimes wins him a little beyond his home boundaries ; and through all we feel that the singer we admire is happily sheltered, as any of his roof-tree birds, in a sacred domestic seclusion. We also know well that he can evoke beauty from the homelier aspects of life and Nature, as no other has done. Who else has dared bring into poetry that plain bird, the black thrush, whose song is both a feline mew and an entrancing carol ?

"Come forth !" my catbird calls to me,
 "And hear me sing a cavatina
 That, in this old familiar tree,
 Shall hide a garden of Alcina.

"These buttercups shall brim with wine
 Beyond all Lesbian juice or Massic :
 May not New England be divine ?
 My ode to ripening summer classic ?

"Or, if to me you will not hark,
 By Beaver Brook a thrush is ringing
 Till all the alder-coverts dark
 Seem sunshine-dappled with his singing."

Visions which are truest realities, and realities that fade away into the realms of phantasy until we half doubt whether they ever had a tangible existence—art, poetry, and life are full of these.

After youth is past, we hold it in ideal possession still, invested with a freshness and a radiance far beyond those which it brought to us in actual experience. And spring, left a little behind us, wafts a tenderer fragrance from its few early blossoms than any that comes to us from the multitude of midsummer flowers.

What Northern flower is fuller of poetic associations than our trailing arbutus, the recluse of the bare and chilly forest, hiding its delicate beauty under colorless masses of decayed leafage, breathing its unregarded perfume out into air bleak with near memories of winter, and choosing often the barrenest of rocky hillsides for its hermitage? Its fragrance has found way into the verses of many a poet, and is sweet indeed in Stedman's "Seeking the May Flower":

To me, when in the sudden spring
I hear the earliest robin's lay,
With the first trill there comes again
One picture of the May.

The veil is parted wide, and lo!
A moment though my eyelids close,
Once more I see that wooded hill
Where the arbutus grows.

I see the village dryad kneel,
Trailing her slender fingers through
The knotted tendrils, as she lifts
The pale, pink flowers to view.



*"Where Artichoke in shadow slides,
The lily on her painted tides."*

Fresh blows the breeze through hemlock-trees,
The fields are edged with green below ;
And naught but youth and hope and love
We know, or care to know.

Hark ! from the moss-clung apple-bough
 Beyond the tumbled wall, there broke
 That gurgling music of the May—
 'Twas the first robin spoke !

Voices and presences of human beings so intermingle themselves with the manifold beauty of natural scenery, and with the sounds of birds and winds and waters, it is well-nigh impossible to separate them, even in imagination ; nor would we, if we could.

No landscape is wholly enjoyable without some suggestion of humanity, for the loneliest and grandest wilderness somehow refers itself to a gazer thereon, though coming only in the character of a solitary and uninvited intruder. But the hills and the fields which have become dear to us because of the imprint of familiar footsteps, and the brooks and rivers which have seemed to bear onward the syllabled utterances of friendly voices, and all things in the beautiful outer world which have brought associations from noble or gentle lives unknown to us into our own, hold us by the most powerful charm.

A sylvan stream that enters the Merrimack only a few miles above its union with the sea, in the quietest of out-of-the-way nooks—the Artichoke—glances to sight in some lovely verses by Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford, entitled “Our Neighbor.” It is well understood who the “neighbor” is—a poet, one of our most beloved and honored, whose name blends naturally with the flow of the Merrimack, beside which he has lived so long, and echoes down the shore made musical with his songs :

From Rivermouth to Ipswich Sound ;
 Where Salisbury sands in yellow length
 With the great breakers measure strength ;

and where

. . . . the great Cape wades to meet
The storms that fawn about her feet.

And the inland associations with this poet's name are pleasant as the odors wafted from flowers that border the streams so dear to him :

Sweeter in Follymill shall blow
The May flowers, that you loved them so.

Where Artichoke in shadow slides,
The lily on her painted tides,
There's naught in the enchanted view
That does not seem a part of you ;
Your legends hang on every hill,
Your songs have made it lovelier still.

We can imagine that none among his numerous septuagenarian tributes could have given the poet greater pleasure than this, coming as if the well-known landscape were greeting him with a human voice.

Hard and cold in its features as that landscape naturally is, scarcely any other portion of our country has blossomed so richly with story and song, and they have left upon it a glow like the tenderness of its own October haze.

Poetry is indeed most delightful for its magical suffusions, wherein the heavens descend to blend themselves with this homely and familiar earth of ours ; and what commonest scenery have we not all sometimes seen clothed upon with the atmosphere of a beatific dream ?

VII.



*"The woodlands wore a gloomy green,
And August hung her smoky screen."*

THE sea is in the landscape as the sky is, being only less universal. The sea liberates the eye from its bondage to earth, which is yet the resting-place whither it gladly returns from its freest flight. Nothing in Nature is so inspiring as this escape into the elements which the vast spaces of the ocean and the heavens afford, and, when we do not find it in a picture, we feel the omission with a sense of indefinable loss.

The ocean weaves a fringe of glory for the land, blending it

with the infinite ether into which it widens ; but, one must stand upon the shore, fully to enjoy the magnificence of the sea ; and the imagery that reveals its beauty is drawn from the earth, the home of the opal and the rose, as we find them in Emerson's lovely lines :

. . . . Behold the sea,
The opaline, the plentiful and strong,
Yet beautiful as is the rose in June.

The charm of island-scenery is not always so much in itself as in the expanse by which it is surrounded. The more barren the island, the more wondrous the magic wrought upon it by subtle fingerings of light, wandering across it from engirding distances. Few resorts of summer tourists exhibit so little of the luxuriance of Nature as the Isles of Shoals, yet few are attractive in so simple and powerful a way. The larger of them is enthusiastically described by Lowell, in his " Pictures from Apple-dore " :

A common island, you will say ;
But stay a moment ; only climb
Up to the highest rock of the isle ;
Stand there alone for a little while,
And with gentle approaches it grows sublime,
Dilating slowly as you win
A sense from the silence to take it in.
So wide the liveness, so lucid the air,
The granite beneath you so savagely bare,
You well might think you were looking down
From some sky-silenced mountain's crown
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.
Till now, you dreamed not what could be done
With a bit of rock and a ray of sun.

But look ! how fade the lights and shades
 Of keen bare edge and crevice deep !
 How doubtfully it fades and fades,
 And glows again, yon craggy steep,
 O'er which, through color's dreamiest grades,
 The yellow sunbeams pause and creep !
 Now pink it blooms, now glimmers gray,
 Now shadows to a filmy blue,
 Tries one, tries all, but will not stay,
 But flits from opal hue to hue,
 And runs through every tenderest range
 Of change that seems not to be change.

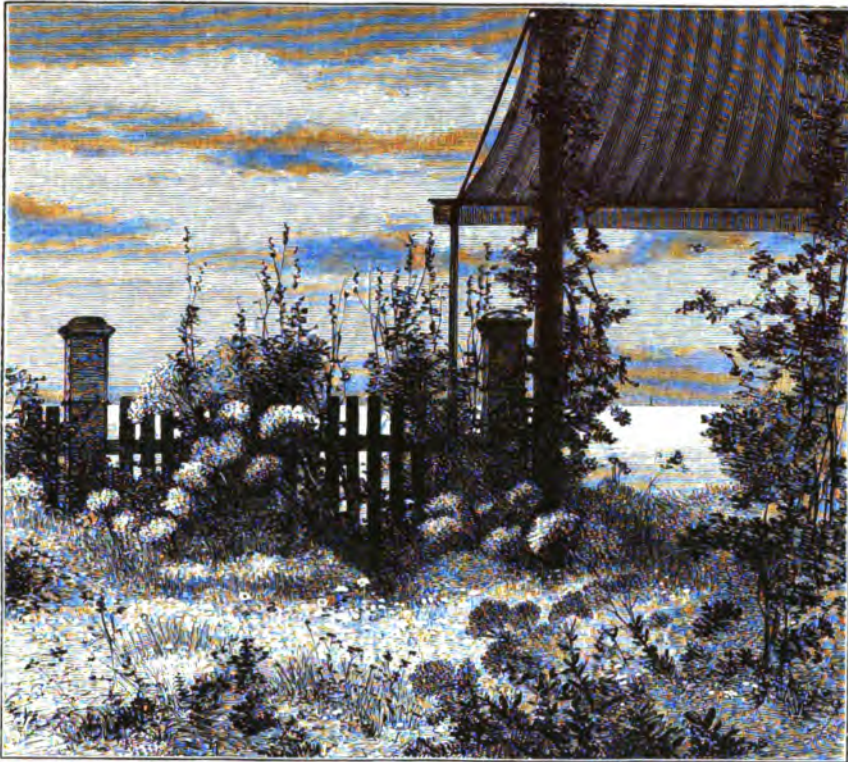
The island is also fortunate in being the home of a singer
 affluent in picturesque and melodious expression, Mrs. Celia
 Thaxter, of whose sea-swept garden the artist gives us a glimpse :

Come out into the garden, where the crimson phloxes burn,
 And every slender lily-stem upbears a lustrous urn !—

Sunflower tall and hollyhock that wave in the wind together,
 Corn-flower, poppy, and marigold blossoming fair and fine,
 Delicate sweet-peas, glowing bright in the quiet autumn weather,
 While over the fence, on fire with bloom, climbs the nasturtium-vine.

The well-tended flower-plot in the midst of the ocean gives
 brilliant contrasts of color to its limitless gray background by
 day, and at night the beacon-light opens like a blossom out of
 the darkness, in the singer's fancy :

I lit the lamps in the lighthouse tower,
 For the sun dropped down, and the day was dead :



*"Come out into the garden, where the crimson phloxes burn,
And every slender lily-stem upbears a lustrous urn!"*

*"So bleak these shores, wind-swept, and all the year
Washed by the wild Atlantic's restless tide."*

They shone like a glorious clustered flower,
 Ten golden, and five red.

In Mrs. Thaxter's poems, we traverse the little isle, through its gorges and coves and grassy openings, and find an ever-returning charm in the beacon-light, the anchored fishing-boats, the drifting gulls, and the wild-flowers wet with salt spray, that cling to rocky clefts, or gleam from the brown turf at our feet :

So bleak these shores, wind-swept, and all the year
 Washed by the wild Atlantic's restless tide,
 You would not dream that flowers the woods hold dear
 Amid such desolation dare abide.

But May and June visit the lonely islet as well as the inland forest and meadow ; and in her poem entitled " Rock-Weeds," as in many others, this graceful singer tells us, in a very charming manner, how

The barren island dreams in flowers.

A murmur of the sea is in the music of all poets, even though they may not live upon its borders ; for does it not reverberate over the continents as with an echo from eternity ? See how its morning glow is reflected in Bayard Taylor's verses :

Where yonder dancing billows dip
 Far off, to ocean's misty verge
 Plows Morning, like a full-sailed ship,
 The Orient's cloudy surge.

With spray of scarlet fire before
 The ruffled gold that round her dies,

She sails above the sleeping shore,
Across the waking skies.

The dewy beach beneath her glows :
A penciled beam, the lighthouse burns :
Full-breathed, the fragrant sea-wind blows,
Life to the world returns !

This latest-lamented among our sons of song has left behind him landscape-pictures from many lands. Born in one of those pleasant States midway between East and South and West, it was natural that his fancies should take a wide range in his own country ; and we find both shores of the hemisphere in his verse, while he lingers most lovingly amid the quiet scenery of his birthplace.

We are taken into the very heart of summer as we read Bayard Taylor's little poem, "In the Meadows." The fine artistic sense with which it is pervaded makes us at once see the beauty and feel the sweetness of the season. The song is one of his earliest, and shows, in its tender simplicity, the impulse toward expression that was always irresistible within him :

I lie in the summer meadows,
In the meadows all alone,
With the infinite sky above me,
And the sun on his mid-day throne.

The smell of the flowering grasses
Is sweeter than any rose,
And a million happy insects
Sing in the warm repose.

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The mother-lark that is brooding,
 Feels the sun upon her wings,
 And the deeps of the noonday glitter
 With swarms of fairy things.



*"I lie in the summer meadows,
 In the meadows all alone."*

From the billowy green beneath me
 To the fathomless blue above,
 The creatures of God are happy
 In the warmth of their summer love.

The infinite bliss of Nature
 I feel in every vein ;
 The light and the life of summer
 Blossom in heart and brain.

His was a nature better fitted for climates of perpetual summer, than for that into which he was born : the ardent glow of the Orient seems the natural atmosphere of his verse. Yet, with a poetic sensitiveness to all influences of earth and air, and with the touch of an artist, he represents faithfully the spirit of whatever landscape his pen may depict. He has sketched August among the sunny Pennsylvanian hills with loving study, although his heart seems only half at home there, but is returning to the "golden hills of Cos"—to the "phantoms of Carian shores," glimmering across the "waveless Mediterranean sea-floor," and to the islands of Patmos and Naxos—

Once as I saw them sleeping, drugged with the poppy of summer.

Yet his picture of his native fields is true to the life :

Over the tasseled corn, and fields of the twice-blossomed clover,
 Dimly the hills recede in the reek of the colorless hazes :
 Dull and lusterless now, the burnished green of the woodlands ;
 Leaves of blackberry-briers are bronzed and besprinkled with copper :
 Weeds in the unmown meadows are blossoming purple and yellow,
 Roughly entwined, a wreath for the tan and the wrinkles of summer.

The homely blossoms at his feet awaken ever some foreign
 or classical contrast :

Flaring St.-John's-wort, milk-weed, and coarse, unpoetical mullein :
 Yet, were it not for the poets, say, is the asphodel fairer ?
 Were not the mullein as dear, had Theocritus sung it, or Bion ?

Nothing is quite responsive to the mood of the dreamer who gazes upon some wearily familiar scene with a fairer landscape gliding across his memory or his fancy. It is almost a misfortune to have seen too much, if we are thus hindered from the enjoyment of what is less satisfactory, although still beautiful, in our every-day surroundings. But shadows which fled before the tourist poet, in his wanderings, seemed to draw nearer to him at home—that darkest shadow of all, which he saw lying upon the churchyard roses, when

The woodlands wore a gloomy green,
 The tawny stubble clad the hill,
 And August hung her smoky screen
 Above the valleys, hot and still—

the shadow that even in the June-illuminated meadows stole across the landscape into his verse, and made him exclaim :

There's life in the summer meadows,
 But death is in the world !

For this glowing, light-loving spirit, all shadows are now laid beneath the peaceful greenness of his native hills. Out of his dust should the warmth of the rose for ever spring into bloom !

Over the westward hills, beyond the deep-flowing Hudson, come glimpses into sunny distance, and wafts of melody from wayside singers. In Alfred B. Street's verses, we follow the windings of forest-fringed rivers—the Ausable, the Racket, the



*"The jessamine hangs golden flowers
On ancient oaks in moss arrayed."*

*"The loveliest land that smiles beneath the sky,
The coast-land of our Western Italy."*

Beaverkill, the Delaware—and catch glimpses of pleasant inland lakes—Cayuga, Champlain, or Saranac. His stanzas on the “Upper Saranac” are delightfully suggestive :

Down to thy wave the fish-hawk swoops ;
 The wood-duck floats within thy bays ;
 Its trunks the water-maple groups
 Along thy banks of leafy maze.

The gull darts by, a flash of snow ;
 Deep from thy brink green pictures gleam ;
 The loon shouts o'er and shoots below ;
 The soft haze folds thee in a dream.

The lily lifts its creamy cup
 In thy broad shallows, amber-clear ;
 And there the thatch shoots bristling up,
 And there steals down the drinking deer.

But Percival's “Seneca Lake,” familiar as it is, must always be esteemed one of our finest lake-poems :

On thy fair bosom, silver lake,
 The wild swan spreads his snowy sail,
 And round his breast the ripples break,
 As down he bears before the gale.

The waves along thy pebbly shore,
 As blows the north wind, heave their foam,
 And curl around the dashing oar
 As late the boatman hies him home.

How sweet, at set of sun, to view
 Thy golden mirror, spreading wide,
 And see the mist of mantling blue
 Float round the distant mountain's side !

From farther inland, a gleam of the Wabash opens upon us,
 in this sonnet by Maurice Thompson :

There is a river singing in between
 Bright fringes of papaw and sycamore,
 That stir to fragrant winds on either shore,
 Where tall blue herons stretch their necks, and lean
 Over clear currents, flowing cool and thin
 Through the clean furrows of the pebbly floor.
 My own glad river ! though unclassic, still
 Haunted of merry gods, whose pipings fill
 With music all thy golden willow-brakes,
 Above thee, Halcyon rears his regal crest ;
 The tulip-tree flings thee its flower-flakes,
 The tall flag over thee its lances shakes.
 With every charm of beauty thou art blest.
 O happiest river of the happy West !

Not many of our poets have pictured the wide plains that
 slope toward the setting sun :

. . . . the gardens of the desert,
 The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
 For which the speech of England has no name—
 The prairies.

We get an impressive glimpse of them, however, in a sonnet
 by John James Piatt, entitled " A Mirage of the West " :

Above the sunken sun the clouds are fired
 With a dark splendor ; the enchanted hour
 Works momentary miracles in the sky ;
 Weird shadows take from fancy what they lack
 For semblance, and I see a boundless plain,
 A mist of sun and sheaves in boundless air,
 Gigantic shapes of reapers moving slow
 In some new harvest : so I can but dream
 Of my great land, that takes its morning star
 Out of the dusky evening of the east—
 My land, that lifted into vision gleams
 Misty and vast.

Paul Hayne writes with enthusiasm of the South—of its
 oaks and pines and magnolias, of its waterfalls and its lapsing
 seas. On the shores of South Carolina he sings :

I hear the inarticulate murmurs flow
 Of the faint wind-tides breathing like a sea ;
 When, in clear vision, softly dawns on me
 The loveliest land that smiles beneath the sky,
 The coast-land of our Western Italy.
 I view the waters quivering ; quaff the breeze,
 Whose briny raciness keeps an under-taste
 Of flavourous tropic sweets,
 From Cuba's perfumed groves and garden spiceries.

And among the magnolias on the Ashley River he exclaims :

Yes, found at last, the earthly paradise !
 Here by slow currents of the silvery stream
 It smiles, a shining wonder, a fair dream,
 A matchless miracle to mortal eyes.



*"Soon were lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters,
Which, like a network of steel, extended in every direction."*

What whorls of dazzling color flash and rise
From rich azalean flowers, whose petals teem
With such harmonious tints as brightly gleam
In sunset rainbows arched o'er perfect skies!

Of the almost tropical splendor of Nature in Florida and

Louisiana, little, comparatively, has been sung. Our artist gives us an illustration of the former, suggested by verses from the pen of W. H. C. Hosmer :

Where Pablo to the broad St. John
Her dark and briny tribute pays,
The wild deer leads her dappled fawn,
Of graceful limb and timid gaze.

The jessamine hangs golden flowers
On ancient oaks in moss arrayed ;
And proudly the palmetto towers,
While mock-birds warble in the shade.

Sidney Lanier writes, from the marshes of Georgia, of

Glooms of the live-oaks, beautiful braided and woven
With intricate shades of the vines, that, myriad-cloven,
Clamber the forks of the multiform boughs :

but the best poetical descriptions of the lakes and bayous of Louisiana are doubtless to be found in Longfellow's "Evangeline" ; as, for instance, that of the lakes of the Atchafalaya, where

Water-lilies in myriads rocked on the slight undulations
Made by the passing oars, and, resplendent in beauty, the lotus
Lifted her golden crown above the heads of the boatmen.

Under the boughs of Wachita willows, that grew by the margin,
Safely their boat was moored : and scattered about on the greensward,
Tired with their midnight toil, the weary travelers slumbered.
Over them vast and high extended the cope of a cedar :
Swinging from its great arms, the trumpet-flower and the grape-vine

Hung their ladder of ropes aloft like the ladder of Jacob,
 On whose pendulous stairs the angels ascending, descending,
 Were the swift humming-birds, that flitted from blossom to blossom—
 Such was the vision Evangeline saw as she slumbered beneath it.

And again, when, after gliding down the forest-shadowed river,
 with its green islands and "plume-like cotton-trees"—

They emerged into broad lagoons, where silvery sand-bars
 Lay in the stream, and along the wimpling waves of their margin,
 Shining with snow-white plumes, large flocks of pelicans waded.

.
 They were approaching the region where reigns perpetual summer,
 Where through the Golden Coast, and groves of orange and citron,
 Sweeps with majestic curve the river away to the eastward.
 They, too, swerved from their course; and, entering the bayou of
 Plaquemine,
 Soon were lost in a maze of sluggish and devious waters,
 Which, like a network of steel, extended in every direction.
 Over their heads the towering and tenebrous boughs of the cypress
 Met in a dusky arch, and trailing mosses in mid-air
 Waved like banners that hang on the walls of ancient cathedrals.

It is to be remembered that this vivid description is from a Northern pen: the most luxuriant climates do not seem to have been over-productive of poets. But in this, as in many other ways, the resources of our West and South are as yet only partly developed.

Certainly the poet and the painter of the future will find abundant material ready for their hand, in the landscape thus far so little explored for the purpose of seeing its beauty, and revealing it to the world.

VIII.



*"White clouds, whose shadows haunt the deep,
Light mists, whose soft embraces keep
The sunshine on the hills asleep!"*

AS yet, only occasional glimpses of our Golden Coast have found their way into the national poetry. Bret Harte has given us rich specimens from more than one mine of story and song on the Pacific shore—has opened veins of literary wealth which no hand has yet made so productive as his own. We have to thank him for pictures of the strangely intermixed human life of California, and also for suggestions of the wonderful background against which it is seen—

The tall pines bowing where they stand,
 The bared head of El Capitan;
 The tumult of the waterfalls,
 Pohono's kerchief in the breeze,
 The waving from the rocky walls,
 The stir and rustle of the trees.

Joaquin Miller, in his several volumes, furnishes full and brilliant descriptions of the plains, and cañons, and mountain-ranges of the Far West :

Afar the bright Sierras lie,
 A swaying line of snowy white,
 A fringe of heaven hung in sight
 Against the blue base of the sky.

I look along the valley's edge,
 Where swings the white road like a swell
 Of surf, along a sea of sedge,
 And black and brittle chaparral,
 And enters like an iron wedge
 Drove in the mountain dun and brown,
 As if to split the hills in twain.

To east and to west, to the north and the sun,
 Blue skies and brown grasses are wedded as one—
 And the buffalo come like a cloud on the plain,
 Pouring on like the tide of a storm-driven main—
 And the lodge of the hunter to friend or to foe
 Offers rest; and unquestioned you come or you go—
 My plains of America! seas of wild lands!
 I turn to you, lean to you, lift you my hands.

The scenery of the Yosemite Valley, and of the Rocky Mountains, although more familiar to us through art—the art of the painter and the engraver—than through poetry, is not unfrequently most vividly suggested to us in a line or two from some poet who never visited the Western shores of our continent, except in imagination.

How could we dream of a vaster forest-loneliness than is hinted in Bryant's lines about

. . . . The continuous woods
Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound
Save its own dashings?

Or by what route could we enter the wilds between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean, and perceive their savage charm, as we do through the magic of Longfellow's pen, when he takes us where

. . . . Among the Wind River Mountains
Through the Sweetwater Valley precipitate leaps the Nebraska?

Or what picture of a wilderness mountain-peak gives us such an impression of sublimity as that gleam of

. . . . Awful Shasta's icy shrine,

in one of Whittier's hymns?

But rural landscapes, drawn by the hand of one who has from childhood loved the trees under whose shadow he writes, have a peculiar attraction. The pines of Georgia rise above us in Paul Hayne's poetry, and we look upon them with something of his own enthusiasm:



*"The tall pines bowing where they stand,
The bared head of El Capitan."*

*"Afar the bright Sierras lie,
A swaying line of snowy white."*

Tall, somber, grim, they stand with dusky gleams
 Brightening to gold within the woodland's core,
 Beneath the gracious noontide's tranquil beams.

A stillness strange, divine, ineffable,
 Broods round and o'er them in the wind's surcease,
 And on each tinted copse and shimmering dell
 Rests the mute rapture of deep-hearted peace.

Shy forms about the greenery, out and in,
 Flit 'neath the broadening glories of the morn;
 The squirrel—that quaint sylvan harlequin—
 Mounts the tall trunks, while swift as lightning born
 Of summer mists, from tangled vine and tree
 Dart the dove's pinions, pulsing vividly
 Down the dense glades, till glimmering far and gray,
 The dusky vision softly melts away.

- Penetrating with him his hilly Southern woods, the thunders of the Falls of Tallulah burst upon us, the mingled roar of “five infuriate torrents”:

From ledge to ledge the impetuous current sweeps,
 For ever tortured, tameless, unsubdued,
 Amid the darkly humid solitude;
 Through waste and turbulent deeps
 It cleaves a terrible pathway, overrun
 Only by doubtful flickering of the sun,
 To meet with swift cross-eddies, whirlpools set
 On verges of some measureless abyss.

Or, ascending with him the summits of the Blue Ridge,
 touched with the early tints of autumn, we are shown that

The rainbows of the heaven are not more rare,
 More various, or more beautiful to view,
 Than these rich forest rainbows, dipped in dew
 Of morn and evening, glimmering everywhere
 From wooded dell to dark-blue mountain mere.

A brilliant "Bit of Autumn Color," which found its inspiration at the same beautiful season, among the same peaks, is from the pen of Mrs. Margaret J. Preston :

Centered upon a sloping crest, I gazed
 As one enchanted. The horizon's ring
 Of billowy mountains, flushed with sunseting,
 Islanded me about, and held me 'mazed,
 With beauty saturate. Never color blazed
 On any mortal palette that could fling
 Such golden glamour over everything
 As flashed from autumn's prism, till all was hazed
 With opal, amber, emerald, amethyst,
 That shimmered, mingled, dusked to steely blue.

Our elder poets, Bryant, Halleck, and others, have delighted to sketch mountain-outlines in their verses—the Berkshire Hills, the Catskills, and the Highlands of the Hudson. What echo from our childhood is more familiar than Drake's lines—

The moon looks down on old Cro'nest :
 She mellows the shades on his shaggy breast,
 And seems his huge gray form to throw
 In a silver cone on the wave below ?

And Halleck's "Weehawken" is far too beautiful ever to be forgotten :

Weehawken, in thy mountain-scenery yet
 All we adore of Nature in her wild
 And frolic hour of infancy is met ;
 And never has a summer's morning smiled
 Upon a lovelier scene than the full eye
 Of the enthusiast revels on, when high

Amid thy forest-solitudes, he climbs
 O'er crags that proudly tower above the deep,
 And knows the sense of danger which sublimed
 The breathless moment, when his daring step
 Is on the verge of the cliff, and he can hear
 The low dash of the wave, with startled ear.

In such an hour he turns, and on his view,
 Ocean and earth and heaven burst before him,
 Clouds slumber at his feet, and the clear blue
 Of summer's sky, in beauty bending o'er him—
 The city bright below, and far away,
 Sparkling in golden light, his own romantic bay.

A delicate, impalpable tenderness, as of a midsummer haze,
 seems to cling about Whittier's "Noon at the Lake-side,"
 written on the border of the hill-encircled Winnebepesaukee :

White clouds, whose shadows haunt the deep,
 Light mists, whose soft embraces keep
 The sunshine on the hills asleep !

O isles of calm ! O dark, still wood !
 And stiller skies, that overbrood
 Your rest with deeper quietude !

O shapes and hues, dim beckoning through
 Yon mountain-gaps, my longing view
 Beyond the purple and the blue,



*"Gone has Spring, with all its flowers,
 And gone the Summer's pomp and show."*

To stiller sea and greener land,
 And softer lights and airs more bland,
 And skies—the hollow of God's hand!

Transfused through you, O mountain-friends
 With mine your solemn spirit blends,
 And life no more hath separate ends.

I read each misty mountain-sign ;
 I know the voice of wave and pine,
 And I am yours, and ye are mine.

In various songs by the same poet we have the richness of late summer glowingly depicted, and its gradual passing into the gorgeous colors of autumn, that lose themselves in somber changes before the blank whiteness of winter falls upon them. How the tardy glories of midsummer kindle beneath his touch !—

Along the roadside, like the flowers of gold
 That tawny Incas for their gardens wrought,
 Heavy with sunshine droops the golden-rod,
 And the red pennons of the cardinal-flowers
 Hang motionless upon their upright staves.

And, further on in the season, how lovingly are the blossoms remembered, though now only lingering phantoms, faded and tattered, in their wayside haunts !—

Along the river's summer walk,
 The withered tufts of asters nod ;
 And trembles on its arid stalk .
 The hoar plume of the golden-rod.
 And on a ground of somber fir,
 And azure-studded juniper,
 The silver birch its buds of purple shows ;
 And scarlet berries tell where bloomed the sweet wild rose !

Sad as a sighing wind the voice of the poet is heard in the fading fields he has loved :

Gone has Spring, with all its flowers,
 And gone the Summer's pomp and show,
 And Autumn, in his leafless bowers,
 Is waiting for the Winter's snow.

But autumn in the North is far from being a season of gloom, and no one has pictured its brightness and cheer with more delightful effect than Whittier himself; as, for instance, in one of his earlier poems, "The Huskers":

It was late in mild October, and the long autumnal rain
 Had left the summer harvest-fields all green with grass again;
 The first sharp frost had fallen, leaving all the woodlands gay
 With the hues of summer's rainbow, or the meadow-flowers of May.

Through a thin, dry mist, that morning, the sun rose broad and red;
 At first a rayless disk of fire, he brightened as he sped;
 Yet even his noontide glory fell chastened and subdued
 On the cornfields and the orchards, and the softly pictured wood.

And all that quiet afternoon, slow sloping to the night,
 He wove, with golden shuttle, the haze with yellow light;
 Slanting through the painted beeches, he glorified the hill;
 And beneath it pond and meadow lay brighter, greener still.

And shouting boys, in woodland haunts, caught glimpses of that sky,
 Flecked by the many-tinted leaves, and laughed, they knew not why.
 And schoolgirls, gay with aster-flowers, beside the meadow-brooks,
 Mingled the glow of autumn with the sunshine of sweet looks.

No season has been sung by our poets more frequently, or more satisfactorily, than this. It is, indeed, the most poetic time of the year, in its lingering, changeful, suggestive beauty—in its



*"Farewell the forest-shade, the twilight grove,
The turfy path with fern and flowers inwove."*

splendor and its pathos. Even November, proverbially a dreary month, has unfolded from its gray shroud many a revelation of

unexpected beauty for eyes that were open to see. When the blaze of October magnificence has passed, the simpler and nobler elements of the landscape assert themselves; leafless boughs shade into a tender, cloud-like mistiness; and the quiet tints of olive, and bronze, and dead gold, that linger upon the more tenacious foliage, subdue and enrich even common scenery, idealizing it into something far beyond itself. In such days we seem to walk in a transfigured world.

Of the poems written on this autumn season, "A Still Day in Autumn," by Mrs. Sarah Helen Whitman—recently deceased—is one of the loveliest:

I love to wander through the woodlands hoary
 In the soft gloom of an autumnal day,
 When Summer gathers up her robes of glory,
 And, like a dream of beauty, glides away.

How through each loved, familiar path she lingers,
 Serenely smiling through the golden mist,
 Tinting the wild grape with her dewy fingers,
 Till the cool emerald turns to amethyst!

Warm lights are on the sleepy uplands waning
 Beneath dark clouds along the horizon rolled,
 Till the slant sunbeams, through their fringes raining,
 Bathe all the hills in melancholy gold.

The little birds upon the hillside lonely,
 Flit noiselessly along from spray to spray,
 Silent as a sweet, wandering thought, that only
 Shows its bright wings, and softly glides away.

Although she too sings sadly, after the leaves have fallen :

Farewell the forest-shade, the twilight grove,
The turfy path with fern and flowers inwove.

She sometimes shows the dark month under a rare illumination, as in her "November Landscape on the Moshassuck" :

How like a rich and gorgeous picture hung
In memory's storied hall seems that fair scene
O'er which long years their mellowing tints have flung !
The wayside flowers had faded, one by one ;
Hoar were the hills, the meadows drear and dun,
When homeward wending, 'neath the dusky screen
Of the autumnal woods, at close of day,
As o'er a pine-clad height my pathway lay,
Lo ! at a sudden turn, the vale below
Lay far outspread, all flushed with purple light :
Gray rocks and umbered woods gave back the glow
Of the last day-beams, fading into night.

The poet Lowell can write in his "Palinode"—

. . . . 'Tis autumn now
On field and hill, in heart and brain ;

but his "Indian Summer Reverie" fairly blazes with the glory of the passing year. Birch and maple and sumach and scarlet-oak glow upon his illuminated pages with unique and dazzling metaphors :

The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees,
Her poverty, as best she may, retrieves,

And hints at her foregone gentilities
 With some saved relics of her wealth of leaves ;
 The swamp-oak, with his royal purple on,
 Glares red as blood across the sinking sun,
 As one who prouder to a fallen fortune cleaves.



*" . . . 'Tis autumn now
 On field and hill, in heart and brain."*

He looks a sachem, in red blanket wrapt,
 Who, 'mid some council of the sad-garbed whites,
 Erect and stern, in his own memories lapt,

With distant eye broods over other sights—
 Sees the hushed wood the city's flare replace,
 The wounded turf heal o'er the mill-way's trace,
 And roams the savage Past of his undwindled rights.

The ash her purple drops forgivingly
 And sadly, breaking not the general hush:
 The maple-swamps glow like a sunset sea—
 Each leaf a ripple with its separate flush.

These colors are not too high for the reality; and the material which might be drawn upon for illustration of our general subject seems wellnigh inexhaustible.

Yet, lovingly though our poets have depicted Nature, as they have witnessed her peculiar aspects in their own land, there is, in her infinite variety, abundant inspiration for poets yet unborn. Our Western World has not yet unfolded half its wealth of sublime and beautiful scenery, most of which has only come to light in the search for more palpable treasures.

And even familiar paths, and the phases of recurring seasons, have always something new to unveil to the eye of genius, opening upon them for the first time. No region that poetry has once glorified, if left undesecrated, can ever lose its wealth.

It is poetry that guides the hand of the artist, even as it opens the lips of the singer, in the presence of beauty, however made visible. And as artist and poet see and work together in reverent brotherhood, our country will grow more nobly worthy, through fresh creations of genius, to bear the name received from its earliest discoverers—the New World.

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